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THE LATTER DAYS OF JUDAH.

MRS CLERE.



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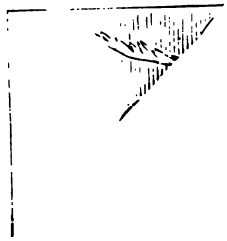
LATTER DAYS OF JUDAH,

AND HER FALL.



JEREMIAH AND THE PRINCESSES OF JUDAH.

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THE LATTER DAYS OF JUDAH, AND HER FALL.

BY

MRS. CLERE,

AUTHORESS OF

'THE APOSTLES OF JESUS,' 'BETHLEHEM'S THREE MOTHERS,' ETC.

'How doth the city solitary sit, she that was full of people!
How is she become a widow, that was great among the nations!
Princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary!'

Lamentations, i. 1.



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PREFACE.

WHEN the writer of the following pages began this little work, her intention was to give but a mere outline of the latter days of Judah and her fall, and then to enter fully into the history of the Judean exiles in Babylonia and Persia. She, however, found the closing scenes of Judah's sad history so full of deeply interesting matter, embracing, as they do, the life of Jeremiah, that it was impossible to avoid entering into their details. The consequence is, that she has been obliged to lay down her pen without attempting at present to follow the Hebrew captives to their exile home. Should she, however, be spared to carry out her original design, she hopes, ere long, to present to her readers a sequel to the volume she now lays before them, under the title of 'The Judean Exiles *in Babylon and* Persia.'

THE
LATTER DAYS OF JUDAH, AND HER FALL.

CHAPTER I.



E not Thou wroth exceedingly, O Lord!
Neither remember Thou our sins for ever;
See, we beseech Thee, we are all Thy people.
Thy holy cities are a wilderness,
Jerusalem and Zion desolation.
Our holy beautiful house, wherein our fathers
Have praised Thee, is burned up with fire,
And all our pleasant places are laid waste.
Wilt Thou refrain Thyself for this, O Lord?
And, silent still, afflict us very sore?'[1]

In all her renewed strength and splendour, with her massive walls and fortresses, her gates and bars, her glorious temple, her palaces and her treasure-houses, Jerusalem, 'the perfection of beauty, the joy of the whole earth,'[2] stood when this exquisite prayer, lamentation, and prophecy burst from the

[1] Isa. lxiv. 9–12. Mrs. Petrie's translation.
[2] Lam. ii. 15.

lips of the aged Isaiah. Never, apparently, had the holy city rested more firmly on her rocky site than then. No foreign foe threatened her; but even if it had been so her disciplined troops and well-filled armouries, her fortified towers and double wall, and her good and wise king, were sufficient to ensure confidence in her own powers of resistance. Above all, she was at peace within herself and in no danger of being weakened by internal strife, for the gods of the heathen had been destroyed, and her children were united in serving the one true God. But the veteran seer was not deceived; he saw idolatry again rampant throughout the land, the Chaldeans encamped around his beloved Jerusalem, the 'holy and beautiful house' first polluted with false deities, then pillaged by heathen foreigners, then a blazing pile, and, lastly, a mass of blackened ruins; and he saw his countrymen slaughtered without mercy, or carried naked and fettered into captivity. So vividly indeed did Jerusalem in ashes present itself to the inspired gaze of the great prophet, that he speaks as though he were (like Jeremiah a hundred years afterwards) standing amid the embers of her who was so long 'princess among the provinces.'[1]

When the few words we have just quoted from Isaiah's incomparable book were written, the life of Hezekiah, one of the three most perfect of Judah's kings, was drawing to a close. For twenty-

[1] Lam. i. 2.

nine years he had with piety and wisdom governed his small kingdom, producing, outwardly, at least, a complete reformation. The false gods were burnt and their temples demolished, the temple of the great Jehovah was cleansed from every remnant of idolatry, even the venerable brazen serpent made by Moses in the wilderness, and which had been so carefully preserved, Hezekiah broke to pieces, because it had become an object of superstitious worship, and the passover and other feasts were again celebrated with all solemnity. But not with the last days of Hezekiah ought we to commence our sad history of the decline and fall of Judah.

In order that we may clearly understand the political position of the little kingdom at this most critical period of her comparatively brief existence as a distinct state, we must turn back a few pages in the sacred chronicles till we have reached that memorable year, the fourteenth of Hezekiah's reign. The opening of this year found Judah at the summit of prosperity. Her cities had been won back from the Philistines, her king, confident in the Divine arm that helped him, had ventured to throw off the Assyrian yoke by refusing to pay the tribute levied upon the nation by Tiglath-Pileser in the reign of Hezekiah's wicked father Ahaz. Her capital, beautified, enriched, and strengthened, was indeed worthy of her title 'Princess;' and her children, rejoicing in the restoration of their divinely ordained religious

ceremonies, had cast off heathenism with all its degrading and cruel rites. It is true the great Assyrian army had approached close to her borders, and had hitherto in its terrible march swept all before it. Israel had fallen, and the ten tribes had been scattered as chaff before the wind, and driven into exile. But if Judah were threatened, would not the Lord spread His wing over her, and save her for His servant David's sake? The fourteenth anniversary of Hezekiah's accession to the throne dawned, and, doubtless, the eventful day was celebrated with all the zeal of a loyal and grateful people. Ere long consternation and mourning filled the kingdom. The beloved Hezekiah was attacked with a disease fatal in its character,—the pestilence, as is supposed. How the king prayed and wept, how the prophet Isaiah was sent to assure him that his life would be prolonged fifteen years, how the doubting, smitten one, required a sign that he would recover, how the sign was given by the shadow of the sun on the sun-dial of Ahaz going back ten degrees, and how the king was restored to health, is a story familiar to all. The inspired chronicler has left us to picture to ourselves the fastings and the tears of the nation whilst the revered king lay in his deadly sickness, and the rejoicings and offerings of praise and thanksgiving when he again appeared among *his people.* His own sublime psalm of thanksgiving *is found* in the thirty-eighth chapter of Isaiah.

Upon the king's recovery there would doubtless be many royal receptions given to those who came to offer their congratulations; but only the reception of the Babylonian ambassadors is mentioned, and that doubtless in consequence of its sad results. The ostensible reason for the visit of the Chaldean nobles was to congratulate the king on his restoration to health, and as a secondary motive to inquire, with their innate curiosity concerning all relating to astronomy, 'of the wonder that was done in the land.'[1] But the main cause of this act of courtesy on the part of the king of Babylon was probably to ascertain how far an alliance could be formed with Judah against the Assyrian monarch, who was intending to include Babylon in his list of conquered cities. Nineveh was then in the ascendancy, undoubtedly Queen of the East. Her twin-sister Babylon was on the decline. A few years later Nineveh had fallen to rise no more; Babylon had become 'the glory of kingdoms.'[2] Too welcome did Hezekiah make his heathen visitors. He was elated that ancient Babylon should pay him so much respect, and throwing open all his doors to the ambassadors, he 'showed them the house of his precious things, the silver and the gold, and the spices and the precious ointment, and all the house of his armour, and all that was found in his treasures. There was nothing in his *house*, nor in all his dominion,

[1] *2 Chron.* xxxii. 31. [2] Isa. xiii. 19.

that Hezekiah showed them not.'[1] The ambassadors departed, and Merodach-Baladan's costly gift was added to Hezekiah's treasures, and doubtless the congratulatory epistles were carefully placed among the royal records. Whether ostentation alone, or a politic desire to enhance his importance as an ally in the eyes of the king of Babylon, influenced Hezekiah in the display of his wealth to the foreigners, we know not, but terrible was the rebuke he received from the Almighty. No sooner had the Babylonian ambassadors departed than another ambassador presented himself at the court sent by the King of all kings. He came not in princely attire with a retinue of attendants, nor carried he with him any flattering letters or costly presents. No mantle covered his aged shoulders, and his feet were bare. It was the inspired Isaiah. Conscience-stricken, Hezekiah, for the first time, we may suppose, trembled in the presence of his beloved and revered counsellor, friend, and guide, and in all humility received the awful message from God, 'Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of *Babylon.*'[2] Surely not for an act of pride on the

[1] *Isa. xxxix. 2.* [2] Ibid. 6, 7.

part of her king, who, though very excellent, was still prone to ostentation, the peculiar weakness of his race and age, was Judah doomed to suffer as terrible calamities as have ever darkened the page of history. The Almighty is a just and merciful God, and though grieved and angry with His servant, who it is feared regarded his riches much in the same spirit as Nebuchadnezzar did his magnificent city, it is reasonable to suppose that the Divine message delivered to Hezekiah by Isaiah was but a *reminder* of the already pronounced curse upon Judah for her idolatries and rebellion in the days of Ahaz. From the consternation which the message caused, we may infer that God designed at once to execute judgment against Judah, but the prayers and tears of the king and people prevailed, and Isaiah was commissioned to tell Hezekiah that the evil should not come upon Judah in his days. Tempered with many sad forebodings must have been the relief of the nation upon the proclamation of the second Divine message, and with trembling arms would many a mother press her infant to her breast, and pray that her child might be taken from the evil to come. But soon the prospect of calamities at a future indefinite period was hidden by a cloud darker, because nearer. Suddenly it burst over Judah; for in the same year, the fourteenth of Hezekiah, 'did Sennacherib, king of Assyria, come up against all the

fenced cities of Judah, and took them.'[1] The temerity of Hezekiah in refusing some years before to pay the Assyrian tribute would at once have brought down upon him the vengeance of the indignant Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, had not that monarch been then absorbed in the siege of Tyre. For five years the Tyrians, though suffering the greatest hardships, heroically held out against their terrible foes. Then was Shalmaneser called upon to surrender to one mightier than himself—death. The siege was raised, and Tyre, relieved from her enemies, became once more a 'joyous city,'[2] and her merchants princes and 'the honourable of the earth.'[3] But though delaying her vengeance upon Hezekiah, Assyria had no thought of submitting to insult and pecuniary loss, and the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign beheld Judah ravaged by the Assyrian army under the command of the great Sennacherib. Trembling for the safety of Jerusalem, terrified, and for a time losing his faith in God, Hezekiah sent to Sennacherib, then before Lachish, saying, 'I have offended; return from me: that which thou puttest upon me will I bear.'[4] The sum demanded by Sennacherib, on the payment of which he promised to depart from Judah, was three hundred thousand talents of silver and thirty talents of

[1] 2 Kings, xviii. 13.
[2] Isa. xxiii. 7.
[3] *Isa. xxiii.* 8.
[4] 2 Kings, xviii. 14.

gold.[1] With great difficulty Hezekiah collected the required sum, which was, according to Josephus, sent to Sennacherib, who, upon receiving it, bound himself by an oath no more to molest Judah, but to leave the country. It would appear that the Assyrian monarch kept his word for a time, and marching into Egypt attempted to subdue her; but Hezekiah placed very little confidence in the honour of his formidable foe, and resolved to be prepared as far as possible for a future invasion. He consulted his princes and chief officers, and by their advice repaired the old wall, and built a new one, fortifying the latter with strong towers. He also, among other precautionary measures, caused all the wells outside the city for a great compass to be stopped, and all the brooks and water-courses to be diverted from their natural channels, so that they might not flow towards the city, excepting through a conduit, which would supply Jerusalem during a siege with water, but the enemy beyond the walls would suffer from the want of it.

Whilst Hezekiah was engaged in these great undertakings, Sennacherib was ravaging Egypt. City after city fell before him. At length he was intimidated. When besieging Pelusium he heard that Tirhakah, king of Ethiopia, one of the greatest heroes of antiquity, who ruled over not only the Arabian, and African or Ethiopian Cush,

[1] According to Prideaux, £351,000.

but also Egypt, was coming up with a great force against him. Sennacherib at once raised the siege, and quitting Egypt, returned to Judah, and again attacked Lachish. There is a tradition which was related by the Egyptian priests to Herodotus, that while the king of Assyria laid siege to Pelusium, a great multitude of mice were, at the prayer of the king of Egypt, sent by Vulcan into the Assyrian camp, and in one night ate all the soldiers' shield-straps, quivers, and bow-strings, so that finding themselves without arms for the carrying on of the siege, the Assyrians made a rapid retreat. And there stood in the temple of Vulcan a stone statue of that Egyptian king having a mouse in his hand, and speaking by an inscription to the following effect: 'Let him who looks on me reverence the gods.'

It was about three years after its first siege that Lachish was again attacked by an almost countless multitude of Assyrians. But Sennacherib was impatient to be in possession of Jerusalem; so still retaining an immense army he sent three of his captains, 'Tartan, and Rabsaris, and Rab-shakeh, from Lachish to king Hezekiah with a great host against Jerusalem.'[1] Before commencing any attack Rab-shakeh demanded a parley with Hezekiah, who sent as his delegates three of his state officers, — his secretary, his recorder, and his steward. The Assyrian general 'stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is in the high-

[1] 2 Kings, xviii. 17.

way of the fuller's field,'[1] a plateau on the north of Jerusalem, separated from the city by a ravine so narrow that a person speaking on one side of it could be distinctly heard on the other. The plateau was, we may suppose, on a level with the city walls. The object of Rab-shakeh in demanding a parley was evidently not with the view of making terms with Hezekiah, but to deliver a blasphemous, insolent, and defiant message from his master Sennacherib, and also by threats, persuasions, and bribes, to induce, if possible, the Jewish soldiers to desert and go over to the Assyrians. From the fact that Rab-shakeh spoke in the Hebrew language, it is conjectured that he was an apostate Jew or a captive taken in the fall of Israel. He held a high position at the Assyrian court, being, as his name denotes, the king's cup-bearer. In the second Book of Kings, the second of Chronicles, and in Isaiah, we read at full length the blasphemous and insolent message. Only once was Rab-shakeh interrupted, and then it was by Eliakim the steward, who entreated him to speak in the Syrian language (which he and his two companions understood), that the Jewish soldiers might not comprehend him. The simple-minded, faithful steward did but by his humble request tempt his adversary to work, if possible, still greater mischief, for he at once addressed himself especially to the soldiers. 'Then

[1] 2 Kings, xviii. 17.

Rab-shakeh stood, and cried with a loud voice in the Jews' language, and spake, saying, Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria: Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you; for he shall not be able to deliver you out of his hand: neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, The Lord will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the king of Assyria. Hearken not unto Hezekiah; for thus saith the king of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me, and then eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig-tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his cistern: until I come and take you away to a land like your own land; a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oil-olive and of honey, that ye may live, and not die: and hearken not unto Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you, saying, The Lord will deliver us. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand? Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand?'[1] Where, indeed, were the *false gods* of Hamath, Arpad, Sepharvaim, Hena,

[1] 2 Kings, xviii. 28–35.

and Ivah, the unhappy children of the kingdom of Israel had to their ruin blindly trusted in? and where, thou wretched apostate, were the gods of Nineveh thou then professedst to adore? Rabshakeh would naturally expect a reply to his impious oratory—a burst, perhaps, of indignation from the insulted Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah, and, perchance, a murmur of approbation from the soldiers on the wall. 'But the people held their peace, and answered him not a word: for the king's commandment was, saying, Answer him not.'[1] The profound and dignified silence which prevailed when his own evil tongue had done its worst, doubtless exasperated the Assyrian emissary, and caused him to marvel not a little at the forbearance of his listeners. With rent clothes, expressive of their grief, Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah, carried Sennacherib's message to Hezekiah. When the noble and pious king heard it he did not demean himself by sending back railing for railing, but rending his clothes, and covering himself with sackcloth, went into the House of the Lord. Loss of earthly treasure, personal insult, suffering, and danger, he could bear patiently, but indignity offered to his God called forth an agony of grief. He sent a deputation of his chief officers and the elders of the priests to Isaiah, begging him to lift up his prayers for the city, that the Lord would help His people, and reprove the blasphemy of

[1] 2 Kings, xviii. 36.

Sennacherib. 'And Isaiah said unto them, Thus shall ye say unto your master, Thus saith the Lord, Be not afraid of the words which thou hast heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. Behold, I will send a blast upon him, and he shall hear a rumour, and shall return to his own land; and I will cause him to fall by the sword in his own land.'[1]

Rab-shakeh returned to Sennacherib, who, having taken Lachish, had encamped before Libnah, which lay, as is supposed, a little to the north of Lachish, distant from Jerusalem twenty miles, or may be rather more. In no mood was Sennacherib to hear patiently that his insolent message to Hezekiah had been received with silent contempt, for he had heard a rumour that his dread Ethiopian foe was on his way to relieve the besieged Libnah. More anxious than before to intimidate Hezekiah, Sennacherib wrote him a letter, in which he repeated his blasphemies, defying the Almighty to save Judah from his invincible arms. The arrogant and impious epistle was delivered to Hezekiah, who with simple faith took it up to the temple and spread it before the Lord. 'And Hezekiah prayed before the Lord, and said, O Lord God of Israel, which dwellest between the cherubims, Thou art the God, even Thou alone of all the kingdoms of the earth; Thou hast made heaven and earth. Lord, bow down Thine ear and hear; open, Lord,

[1] 2 Kings, xix. 6, 7.

Thine eyes, and see and hear the words of Sennacherib which hath sent him to reproach the living God. Of a truth, Lord, the kings of Assyria have destroyed the nations and their lands, and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were no gods, but the work of men's hands, wood and stone: therefore they have destroyed them. Now therefore, O Lord our God, I beseech Thee, save Thou us out of his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that Thou art the Lord God, even Thou only.'[1] The Lord heard the pleading of His servant, and the second time comforted him through Isaiah assuring him of His protection, and that the wretched king of Assyria would not escape His vengeance. The wrath of Jehovah against Sennacherib was indeed raised to the highest pitch, and He denounced the arrogant heathen with all the majesty of an insulted God. 'Whom hast thou reproached and blasphemed? and against Whom hast thou exalted thy voice, and lifted up thine eyes on high? even against the Holy One of Israel?'[2] 'Because thy rage against Me, and thy tumult is come up into Mine ears, therefore I will put My hook in thy nose, and My bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way which thou camest.'[3] He would lead the impious monarch as a beast, compel him to go which way He chose. In no mystery was God's assurance, given through Isaiah, that He would guard Jeru-

[1] 2 Kings, *xix. 15–19.* [2] Ibid. 22. [3] Ibid. 28.

salem, clothed. 'Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with a shield, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord; for I will defend this city to save it, for Mine own sake, and for My servant David's sake.'[1] Sleep, sleep secure, ye weary ones, though many a foeman's spear gleams in the bright moonbeams, and the heavy tread of the Assyrian sentinel is heard on the rocky steep and in the dry, parched ravine. What matters it that the dark vales of Jehoshaphat and Hinnom are filled with mighty warriors awaiting the summons to lay your fair city in the dust? The Lord has spread His shield over you, and ye are safe. 'And it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out, and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand: and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses.'[2] Sheath your swords, unstring your bows, ye Judean warriors; your day's task is before you, but it is not of war. A mighty army awaits entombment. Take spade and shovel, dig wide and deep, for many a yawning pit must be filled ere that ghastly host is hidden. And you, ye skilful engineers, make haste to let the waters again flow round your city, the Kidron again fulfil

[1] *2 Kings*, xix. 32–34. [2] Ibid. 35.

its office; for many a swift stream is needed to cleanse the polluted soil. Mount the battlements of God's house, ye priests, and let a blast loud and long from your silver trumpets proclaim victory by the Lord of Hosts. And thou, great Isaiah, whose lips were touched by celestial fire conveyed by seraph's hand, put thy shoes upon thy feet, and cast thy mantle upon thee; appear not on this glad day in the habiliments of woe; throw wide the college gates, and lead thy brethren forth, that holy band (martyrs many to be), and sing of the return of the ransomed of the Lord who shall come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads. And thou, Hezekiah, array thyself in right royal apparel, and bid them bring thine harp, that thou mayest chant thy glorious psalm:

'In Judah's mountain is Jehovah known;
His name is greatly praised in Israel;
His tabernacle also is in Salem;
His dwelling-place on Zion's holy hill.
He shivered there the arrows of the bow,
The shield, the sword, and all the might of battle.
More glorious and excellent art thou,
O Zion! than the mountains of the prey.
The proud in heart are robb'd, they have slept their sleep,
And all the mighty have not found their hands.
At Thy rebuke, O God of Jacob's strength!
The horse and rider sleep the sleep of death.
Thou, even Thou, alone art to be fear'd,
And who may stand before Thee in Thy wrath?
Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven,

Then the earth fear'd, and trembled, and was still,
When God arose to judgment for the meek,
To save the meek and faithful of the earth.
The fierceness of man's wrath shall surely praise Thee,
And the excess of wrath Thou shalt restrain.
Promise the vow unto the Lord your God,
And keep it, ye that dwell around Him;—bring
Your gifts to Him whom nations ought to fear.
He shall restrain the spirit of your princes,
And He is fearful to the kings of earth.'[1]

It is generally supposed that the appalling event, the sudden destruction of one hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrians, by a Divine stroke, did not take place near Libnah, for that Sennacherib, after hearing of the approach of Tirhakah, raised the siege of Libnah, and at once marched to Jerusalem, and encamped within sight of the city walls, when the mad career of the impious king was checked by the Almighty. From the Lord declaring that He would send a blast upon Sennacherib, it is inferred that He caused a hot pestilential wind—'a destroying wind'[2]—to pass over the camp of the Assyrians, slaying all on whom its poisonous breath fell. In the early morning Sennacherib and others—how many or how few we know not—arose, but the great host of victims still slept. No cry had escaped from the smitten ones to rouse the camp; unconsciously they had been cast into the deep sleep of death.

[1] Ps. lxxvi. Mrs. Petrie's translation.
[2] Jer. li. 1.

Sennacherib, with the remnant of his army, fled to Nineveh. For twenty years the impious king continued to carry on his wars, but he did not venture near Palestine again, thus acknowledging his inability to cope with the God of Judah. No shelter, however, was Nineveh to him from the wrath of the great Jehovah; he never recovered the blow he had received in Judah, and several of his provinces, taking advantage of the weakened state of his army, revolted and threw off his yoke. Soured by his losses and disappointments, he grew more and more imperious and tyrannical, venting his rage especially upon the captive Israelites in Nineveh. At length he was unbearable, even in his own family: 'And it came to pass, as he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer his sons smote him with the sword; and they escaped into the land of Armenia.'[1] Some commentators have attempted to palliate in a measure the crime of the parricides, by affirming that Sennacherib, thinking to appease his chief god, whose anger he believed was the cause of his misfortunes, was intending to offer up his two eldest sons in the temple of Nisroch, and that the princes, to save their own lives, slew their father. What ground there is for this assertion we know not, but it would appear that Adrammelech and Sharezer were not in the atrocious deed influenced by ambitious motives, for they seem to

[1] *2 Kings*, xix. 37.

have made no attempt to seize the Assyrian crown, but at once fled the kingdom, leaving their younger brother, Esar-haddon, to succeed to the throne.

As we read the thrilling account of the miraculous deliverance of Judah from her apparently irresistible foes, the Assyrians, all the scenes of the great tragedy, with their striking contrasts, rise before us. The unhappy Jews, pent up in their besieged cities, whilst their fierce invaders swept at will over every mountain, hill, and plain, their track marked by blood and ruin. The prayers and lamentations of the suffering children of God, their distress and terror, and the triumph and exultation of the children of Belial. The simple reliance of Hezekiah on his God alone, and the arrogance and self-confidence of Sennacherib. And in the last scene the utter impotency of the gods of the Assyrians, which were no gods, and the terrible power and majesty of Jehovah, the God of Judah. Jerusalem, the beautiful city of marble and cedar, glittering on her lofty site in the bright morning sun, radiant and joyous, and the camp of the Assyrians, with its ghastly host on the distant plain. All is silent and still on the field of death, save that here and there the hyena, the wolf, and the vulture, have met to battle over their odious feast. One more contrast. The peaceful end of the beloved and pious Hezekiah, and the awful fate of the hated, blasphemous Sennacherib. In turn we sympathise, wonder, adore, and tremble. And

the God of Judah—the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever—is our God, and we are His children by adoption and grace. After the departure of the Assyrians, peace again reigned throughout Judah, and remained unbroken till the death of her good king. According to the word of the Lord, Hezekiah lived fifteen years after his sickness. He died in the prime of life, to the great grief of his subjects, having reigned over Judah twenty-nine years: 'And they buried him in the chiefest of the sepulchres of the sons of David, and all Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem did him honour at his death.'[1] 'The memory of the just is blessed.'[2]

[1] 2 Kings, xxii. 33. [2] Prov. x. 7.

CHAPTER II.

HEZEKIAH was succeeded by his son Manasseh, a mere boy, being but twelve years of age when he ascended the throne. Up to the period of his sad, sad loss, we may feel certain that the young prince, the child of many prayers, the earnestly longed for heir, was trained in the ways of godliness by carefully selected tutors and governors. His father delighted in wisdom and goodness; his mother, as her name Hephzibah denotes, was the delight of her husband: from which we may infer that she also was a true servant of God, and worthy of him who chose her as his queen. But all in vain, for a time at least, proved the pious care of his parents. The youthful king at once fell into the hands of evil counsellors, and alas! gave himself up willingly to their guidance. With Hezekiah's departed spirit seem to have flown all the graces that should have descended to his son; and Manasseh abandoned himself to wickedness, beyond all the wickedness practised by his wretched *grandfather* Ahaz. A very fiend he was in impiety *and cruelty*. His depraved nature displayed itself

chiefly in the most intense hatred to the religion of his father, and he worked with untiring zeal to exterminate the worship of Jehovah, and introduce in its stead heathenism in its vilest form. He converted the holy temple into a house for all manner of idolatrous profanation, setting up in the sanctuary an image dedicated to the host of heaven, and erecting in the sacred courts altars for his false deities. Very soon Jerusalem became the scene of abominations, which must have horrified even her heathen neighbours, for the impious Manasseh, not content with insulting his God, practised witchcrafts 'and dealt with familiar spirits and wizards,'[1] and even sacrificed his son to Moloch. Nothing seems to have been too outrageous for him to commit; and his unfortunate subjects were forced to conform to his will, being seduced by him 'to do more evil than did the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the children of Israel.'[2] And when God sent His prophets to Manasseh to reason with him and exhort him to repent, he treated them with contempt and outrage, causing many of them to be put to death. Not only the prophets, but numbers of others also became martyrs during this reign of terror, for we read that 'Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another,'[3] that is to say, that the city literally ran with the blood of the tyrant's victims. At length

[1] *2 Kings, xxi. 6.* [2] Ibid. 9. [3] Ibid. 16.

the anger of the Lord broke forth in denunciations against the wretched nation. He declared that He would bring such evil upon Jerusalem that the ears of all who heard it would tingle. At once the curse began to work; Assyria again became a rod in the hands of the Almighty to chastise His rebellious children. Esar-haddon, who it appears from his monuments was one of the greatest monarchs Assyria ever produced, having subdued among other powers Babylon, chose that city as his seat of government, and from thence sent an army against Judah. Manasseh met the Assyrian general, gave him battle and was defeated. He attempted to effect his escape, but was taken in a thicket where he had hoped to conceal himself, and was carried bound in fetters of iron to Babylon. Then began the working of the curse pronounced against the descendants of Hezekiah.

It will not be out of place here to speak of two of the officers who were sent by Hezekiah to meet Rab-shakeh, and receive from him the blasphemous message of Sennacherib, we mean Eliakim and Shebna. That the reformation produced by Hezekiah was in a great measure superficial is evident from the fact, that as soon as the good king was dead so many were willing to sink again into the degradation of heathenism. Had this not been the case the nation would have risen against the impious tyrant Manasseh, and, hurling him from the throne of David, have chosen one worthy to fill

it. Many faithful ones there were who bewailed the state of affairs, but, alas! they were in the minority, and thus for upwards of twenty years blasphemy and tyranny reigned triumphant. Among those who had been secretly disaffected towards Hezekiah's reformation was Shebna the scribe. Whether or not Shebna continued to deceive Hezekiah till that monarch's death, and retain his position as the king's secretary, we do not know; but from a passage in Isaiah we infer that in the abandoned court of Manasseh, he held a still more confidential office than he had done in the previous reign, no other than that of steward of the king's household. The faithful Eliakim was, it is presumed, removed to make room for the wicked Shebna. We turn to the twenty-second chapter of Isaiah, and read there a prophecy delivered sixteen years before the death of Hezekiah, in which the sad fate of Shebna and the exaltation of Eliakim are clearly foretold. The wrath of Jehovah against the once hypocritical and afterwards blasphemous Shebna, and His loving favour towards His faithful servant Eliakim, are shown in words so powerful, that none can read them unmoved: 'Thus saith the Lord God of Hosts, Go, get thee unto this treasurer, even unto Shebna, which is over the house and say, What hast thou here, and whom hast thou here, that thou hast hewed thee out a sepulchre here, as he that heweth him out a sepulchre on high, and *that graveth* an habitation for himself in

a rock? Behold, the Lord will carry thee away with a mighty captivity, and will surely cover thee. He will surely violently turn and toss thee like a ball into a large country; there shalt thou die, and there the chariots of thy glory shall be the shame of thy lord's house. And I will drive thee from thy station, and from thy state shall he pull thee down. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah; and I will clothe him with thy robe, and strengthen him with thy girdle, and I will commit thy government into his hand; and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah. And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open. And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father's house. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father's house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons. In that day, saith the Lord of Hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed, and be cut down and fall; and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off: for the Lord hath spoken it.'[1]

We thus learn the career of the two statesmen after the decease of Hezekiah, for not a word of

[1] Isa. xxii. 15-25.

the Lord spoken by His prophets ever failed, or ever will fail, to come to pass. The wicked Shebna, entering, as we presume he did, into all Manasseh's diabolical measures, flourished so long as his master was under the influence of the Evil One. He was made the king's treasurer, a post of honour and trust, that was in Hezekiah's reign filled by the faithful Eliakim. The latter, though during the season of persecution escaping death, suffered much doubtless at the hands of the cruel Manasseh. Probably he was amongst those who 'had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings: yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment;'[1] but he fainted not, and at length even in this life had his reward. In his dark, damp dungeon lay Manasseh, and oh! the height and the depth of Divine mercy; for to God be all the glory, sorrow and misfortune wrought for him what the pleadings and meek endurance of the faithful ones, the warnings and denunciations of Jehovah, the upbraidings of his own conscience—for the still, small voice was not dead within him, and maybe the tears of a heart-broken, widowed mother, had failed to do. 'When he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed unto Him: and He was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord He was God.'[2] Truly might

[1] *Heb. xi. 36.* [2] 2 Chron. xxxiii. 12, 13.

the pardoned monarch say, as did his great ancestor, 'It is good for me that I have been afflicted.'[1]

Let the doubting, penitent soul, bowed down with the weight of heavy sins, take comfort from the history of Manasseh. Who can say that the gates of heaven are barred against him when they were opened for the murderer, blasphemer, and worshipper of devils? At the same time, let no wilful sinner presume that he may safely tread the road that leads to hell, trusting that ere the fatal pit opens at his feet he will be arrested, and be led into the narrow path of safety. No angel may be sent to stand between him and destruction. The sacred chronicles tell us of many impious kings who died in their sins, but of one only who repented and besought the Lord to forgive him. Manasseh returned to Jerusalem a free man, released from his sins and his fetters. The aged, and, we presume, to the last, wicked Shebna died in captivity. 'Then Manasseh knew that the Lord He was God.' Strange that up to the hour of his repentance Manasseh knew not 'that the Lord was God.' Had he so totally forgotten the marvellous proofs of the power and love of the God his father worshipped? How often must he when a child have heard from his parent's lips of the destruction of Sennacherib's army, of the supernatural recovery of Hezekiah from his deadly sickness, of the shadow of the sun moving ten degrees backwards,

[1] Ps. cxix. 71.

and of the foretold fifteen years that were added to his father's life! With undoubting faith the young prince must have listened to all the details of each miraculous event; but many subtle arguments, when the pious Hezekiah was gone, and tutors and guardians dismissed, would be used by evil counsellors to instil the poison of infidelity into the young king's mind, with what effect is known. Twenty years' devotion to heathenism had all but effaced from the mind of Manasseh the knowledge of the God of his fathers. On his return from Babylon the penitent king at once set to work to undo as far as lay in his power all the evil he had wrought. Now would the faithful ones that were left in Judah lift up their voices and praise the Lord. Now was Eliakim re-instated in his office as treasurer. Beloved and revered, the aged statesman was as a 'father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem and to the house of Judah.'[1] To him was given the great key of the house of David, which he carried on his shoulder. Keys, which were made long, with the end hooked, were worn hanging from the shoulder as an ensign of power and trust. The venerable Eliakim fell no more. The Lord fastened him 'as a nail in a sure place.'[2] In the dwellings of the East nails or pegs were much used, and it was customary when building a house to fasten the nails in the walls as they were being raised. A nail thus cemented was deemed in a

[1] *Isa.* xxii. 21. [2] Ibid. 23.

sure place—immovable. In the prophecy relating to Eliakim we must look further than to the immediate completion of it, the pious treasurer being by Isaiah regarded as an emblem of Christ, and his paternal government as a figure of Christ's glorious kingdom, when all power should be given Him. The Saviour in the Revelation applied to Himself the very words of the prophet, 'And to the angel of the Church in Philadelphia write: These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David; He that openeth, and no man shutteth; and shutteth, and no man openeth.'[1]

As in a few verses we have all that is recorded of the first part of Manasseh's long reign, so in a few verses is comprised all that has been handed down to us of his history during the years he lived penitent and devoted to the service of God and his country. That a portion of his history has been lost is evident from the words, 'Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh, and his prayer unto his God, and the words of the seers that spake to him in the name of the Lord God of Israel, behold, they are written in the book of the kings of Israel. His prayer also, and how God was entreated of him, and all his sins, and his trespass, and the places wherein he built high places, and set up groves and graven images, before he was humbled: behold, they are written among the sayings of the seers.'[2] Manasseh died after a reign of fifty-five years.

[1] *Rev. iii. 7.* [2] 2 Chron. xxxiii. 18. 19.

Notwithstanding his sincere penitence, and his efforts to restore the country to the state it was in when he ascended the throne, his subjects could not forget the evil he had done, and would not allow him the honour of being buried in the sepulchres of the sons of David, but laid him in a grave made for him in his own garden.

We have till now purposely abstained from noticing an event which occurred, it is generally believed, at the commencement of Manasseh's reign, and which must have added greatly to the anguish of the suffering children of God. We allude to the death of Isaiah, who, according to Jewish tradition, became one of the first martyrs under the persecution of Manasseh. That this was the case is not at all improbable; for foremost we may be assured among those who loudly denounced the conduct of the impious monarch would be the kingly prophet—the dauntless Isaiah. No Divine message, we have reason to suppose, was sent through God's inspired servant to Manasseh, telling him the fatal consequences of his fearful sins; but the remonstrances, the denunciations, the tears, and the prayers of the venerable patriot and seer could not be restrained, and they would testify against him. His fate would be soon sealed. The voice that had by four generations of kings been listened to with reverence and awe—now breathing forth glad tidings, now warning, and then encouraging, and *ofttimes* thundering forth threatenings

of vengeance—must be effectually silenced. No record is given in the Bible of his death, but a Rabbinical tradition hath it, that, when nearly ninety years of age, he was sawn asunder by the command of Manasseh. It is thought by some that St. Paul alludes to his martyrdom in the thirty-seventh verse of the eleventh chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews. At the time of Hezekiah's death, Isaiah must have been eighty or ninety years of age, and whether by the natural decay of its earthly tabernacle, or by the hand of violence, the spirit of the mighty prophet was released from its mortal coil, was of little moment to him. Lightly held was bodily suffering by one who was ever looking beyond to the everlasting mercies God 'hath prepared for him that waiteth for Him.'[1]

It is impossible for us with our limited space, to touch, excepting very briefly, upon the writings of Isaiah the prophet, poet, and historian. His style is considered the most perfect model of the sublime, possessing all the magnificence and all the sweetness of the Hebrew language. In point of eloquence he stands unequalled for the variety of his images, and the animated warmth of his expressions. The marks of a cultivated mind are stamped upon every page of his incomparable book, but these are almost eclipsed by the splendour of his inspired knowledge. His prophecies contain definite predictions of things

[1] Isa. xliv. 4.

to come, commencing with events which were to occur within his own time and that of his contemporaries, and other events which extend through the course of human history to the end of the world, and to the judgment-seat of Christ. With the miraculous gift of prophecy he was also a preacher of righteousness, declaring and expounding God's moral and spiritual law. He rebuked the sin, luxury, and crying vices of the age in which he lived, and of the people by whom he was surrounded. A special message was sent from God through His inspired servant to every denomination of sinners, from the murderer and blasphemer to the vain and foolish woman devoted to dress and fashion. Let no one think his or her besetting sin too trifling to escape the wrath of the Almighty, after reading the woes denounced by Isaiah against the inhabitants of Israel and Judah. Upon the covetous amasser of land, the luxurious reveller, the confounder of moral distinctions, the self-conceited sceptic, the profligate perverter of justice, and upon the proud and vain woman, was the wrath of God denounced. Tremble, ye women who make dress and fashion your idol, when ye read how the Lord condemns your sin in the fair daughters of Jerusalem. Read how minutely he describes the bearing and the ornaments of the Hebrew women, and then persuade yourselves, if ye can, that one iota of your folly *escapes His searching* eye: 'Moreover, the Lord

saith, Because the daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks, and wanton (painted) eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet; in that day the Lord will take away the bravery of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and their cauls (net-works), and their round tires like the moon, the chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, the bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the head-bands, and the tablets, and the earrings, the rings and nose-jewels, the changeable suits of apparel, and the mantles, and the wimples, and the crisping-pins, the glasses, and the fine linen, and the hoods, and the veils.'[1]

Here we have written by Isaiah, under the immediate direction of the Almighty, an inventory of a Hebrew lady's elaborate wardrobe. Sad contrast to the simple attire and virgin modesty, with which we always in imagination clothe the beautiful Rebekah, when she met for the first time her future husband. The graceful figure enveloped in the snowy veil, awaiting with bowed head the approach of him, who no sooner beheld her than he loved her. Could the descendant of Rebekah, a thousand years afterwards, with her haughty look, her mincing gait, her painted eyes, her heathenish ornaments, her lace and her spangles, have inspired the same passion in the breast of the pious son of Abraham. Nay, in loathing would he have turned

[1] Isa. iii. 16–23.

away, choosing solitude in preference to such companionship. More than two thousand years have passed away since the Divine message was sent in anger to the daughters of Israel and Judah, but it seems to us as though it were still being spoken, and woe to those thoughtless ones who heed it not.

For upwards of sixty years Isaiah prophesied in Jerusalem. He loved his people with a passionate love and devotion, which seemed to be ever overflowing in his writings. The exact period when he began to prophesy is not known. It was in the days of Uzziah, but as that monarch reigned fifty-two years, and Isaiah was prophesying according to the Biblical chronology sixty-one years after the death of Uzziah, we presume that the first Divine message delivered by the great prophet was towards the close of Uzziah's reign, during the regency of Jotham, after the king had been stricken with leprosy. A young man Isaiah must have been then, probably not more than twenty years of age. Some commentators are of opinion that the prophecies of the sixth chapter were the first in order: the opening of this chapter containing Isaiah's solemn designation to the prophetical office. He there describes an ecstatic vision he beheld in the temple, in the year king Uzziah died. Beyond the porch, and behind the veil which screened the innermost sanctuary, he saw '*The Lord sitting* upon a throne, high and

lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above it stood the seraphim: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory. And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.'[1] Holy, Holy, Holy; the Christian Church has always held that the doctrine of the ever-blessed Trinity is implied in this repetition. The cherubim declared a threefold holiness, the holiness of the Father, the holiness of the only begotten Son, and the holiness of the Holy Ghost. And it is no conjecture that the cherubim on this occasion celebrated all the three persons of the Godhead. Isaiah saw the Lord of Hosts sitting on the throne: there was the presence of God the Father. That there was also the presence of the Son appears from the forty-first verse of the twelfth chapter of St. John's Gospel. The Evangelist, speaking of our Saviour in connexion with this vision of Isaiah, said, 'These things said Esaias, when he saw His glory, and spake of Him.' And that there was the presence of God the Holy Ghost is determined by the passage in the twenty-fifth verse of the twenty-eighth chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, 'Well spake the Holy Ghost by Esaias the prophet unto our fathers,

[1] Isa. vi. 1–4.

saying.' St. Paul then repeats the commission Isaiah in the vision received from the Lord. In our noble and sublime *Te Deum*, we adore the blessed Trinity in a paraphrase of the song of the seraphim, recorded by Isaiah, and by St. John in the Book of Revelation. As was St. John at Patmos, so was Isaiah in the Temple, overwhelmed with awe. He felt his own sinfulness, and that of all with whom he was connected, and cried, 'Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts.'[1] Then flew one of the seraphim to him with a live coal taken from off the altar in his hand, and laying the coal upon the mouth of the prophet, said, 'Lo, this hath touched thy lips; and thine iniquity is taken away, and thy sin purged.'[2] Isaiah then heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' The prophet answered, 'Here am I, send me.'[3] He at once received his mournful commission, 'Go, and tell this people: Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.'[4] The prophets are sometimes said to

[1] Isa. vi. 5. [2] Ibid. 7. [3] Ibid. 8.
[4] Isa. vi. 9, 10.

perform the things which they only foretell.[1] As a punishment for the Hebrews' provocations and impenitence, God left them to their own blindness and hardness, so that they did not desire to understand and make use of the means of their recovery. Isaiah asked the Lord how long this punishment was to last. The answer was: 'Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate: and the Lord have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.'[2] With what sinking of heart would the loving, sensitive Isaiah hear the doom of his country, but a blessed solace was vouchsafed to him. He was told that a tenth should return, and that there should be a holy seed. Faithfully did the prophet execute his commission. The burden of his song continually was the almost utter destruction of the Hebrew people, with yet a purified remnant. The glorious promise of the return of the remnant, and of the holy seed, ever encouraged and cheered him, and he named his eldest son, Shear-Jashub, which means, 'the remnant shall return,' a name significant of the sorrow that weighed upon the father's heart, and also of its consolation. Beyond the wasting of the cities by the Assyrian hosts; beyond the seventy years' captivity; beyond the return of the exiles from Babylon; beyond the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans; beyond the awful

[1] *Ezek.* xliii. 3. [2] Isa. vi. 11, 12.

massacre of the Jews by Adrian, when 'the remnant' were all but exterminated; beyond the fall of the great Roman power itself, and beyond the age in which we live, the prophet looked. He beheld the dawn of that glorious day when 'the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads.'[1]

Not in his capacity as a prophet proclaiming the fate of nations, or as a teacher of righteousness does Isaiah stand pre-eminent, save in the sublime language in which his visions and his exhortations are clothed, but in his high and sacred calling as an evangelist he is enthroned in the hearts of the followers of Christ. More than all the prophets, Isaiah spoke of the Saviour; and when the Gospel was first preached, his testimony is referred to as if he had been the teacher of it all. He is more quoted in the New Testament than all the other prophets put together. When John the Baptist began to preach he referred to the exclamation of Isaiah, 'The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His path straight.'[2] When our Lord stood up to read in the synagogue at Nazareth 'there was delivered unto Him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written, The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the

[1] *Isa. xxxv. 10.* [2] Matt. iii. 3, and Isa. xl. 3.

gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And He closed the book, and He gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on Him. And He began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.'[1] When the Baptist sent two of his disciples to Jesus to inquire if He were the Christ, our Lord called their attention to those particular works which Isaiah ascribed to the Messiah: 'Then Jesus answering said unto them, Go your way, and tell John what things ye have seen and heard; how that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, to the poor the gospel is preached.'[2] Of the passion of our Saviour written by Isaiah, the Ethiopian eunuch was reading in his chariot when Philip overtook him: 'The place of the scripture which he read was this, He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and like a lamb dumb before his shearers, so opened He not His mouth: in His humiliation His judgment was taken away: and who shall declare His generation? for His life is taken from the earth. And the eunuch answered Philip, and said, I pray thee, of whom speaketh the prophet this? of himself, or of some

[1] Luke, iv. 17–21, and Isa. lxi. 1, 2.

[2] Luke, vii. 22, and Isa. xxxv. 5, 6.

other man? Then Philip opened his mouth, and began at the same scripture, and preached unto him Jesus.'[1] Many other passages could be pointed out in the New Testament proving that Isaiah has been rightly styled the evangelical prophet. It is remarkable that his name signifies 'Salvation of the Lord,' and of him it may truly be said, quoting his own words, 'How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!'[2] Clearly and fully he described the Messiah and characterised His kingdom. He beheld the Gospel state from the birth of the Saviour to the period when all nations shall be gathered into one fold, 'When the Lord of Hosts shall reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem, and before His ancients gloriously.'[3] So distinctly indeed were the birth, ministry, sufferings, and death of the Saviour revealed to Isaiah, and by him made known, that his prophecies, many of them, read more like a history of the past than predictions of the future. Of the writings of this sublime poet and prophet, Gilfillan observes, 'The uniform grandeur, the pomp of diction, the almost painful richness of figure, distinguishing this prophet, would have lessened his power over the common Christian mind, had it not been for the evangelical sentiment in which his strains abound,

[1] Acts, viii. 32–35, and Isa. liii. 7.
[2] *Isa. lii. 7.* [3] Ibid. xxiv. 23.

and which has gained him the name of the Fifth Evangelist. Many bear with Milton solely for his religion. It is the same with Isaiah. The cross stands in the painted window of his style. His stateliest figure bows before Messiah's throne. An eagle of the sun, his nest is in Calvary. Anticipating the homage of the eastern sages, he spreads out before the infant God treasures of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. The gifts are rare and costly, but not too precious to be offered to such a Being: they are brought from far, but He has come farther "to seek and to save that which was lost."'

We know not Isaiah's birth-place or tribe. He was the son of Amoz, and this is all he tells us of his ancestry. The Jews encourage the idea that Amoz was brother to king Amaziah, and Isaiah consequently of the blood royal, but there appears to be no good authority for this opinion. On the subject of his personal history the prophet is silent. Lost and absorbed in the greatness of his visions, he never speaks of himself or his family but in connexion with his Divine calling. He designates his wife as 'the prophetess;' but whether she was gifted with prophecy or only derived the title from her husband, is unknown. Two of his sons are mentioned whose names and actions were 'for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of Hosts.'[1] With this scanty information we must be content. The brightest luminary the Jewish church

[1] Isa. viii. 16.

ever produced, appeared and disappeared, but though we know not from whence he came or how he departed, he left a track of light behind which will shine with increasing brightness until it is lost in the effulgence of that day when the glory of the Lord shall illumine the earth.

Manasseh was succeeded by his son Amon, who, imitating the first part of his father's reign rather than the latter, gave himself up to all manner of wickedness and impiety. He restored idolatry, worshipping Moloch and the host of heaven. After a short reign of two years, he was at the age of twenty-four assassinated in his palace by his servants. The regicides were brought to justice, and were put to death, but the people refused to give Amon burial in the sepulchre of the sons of David, and made him a grave in the same garden, or royal cemetery, where lay his father and the leprous Uzziah. Amon's son, Josiah, a child only eight years of age, then ascended the throne.

Like a gleam of sunshine cast from a gathering cloud was the reign of the good Josiah. No rules can bind the hands of the Almighty, and in the nursery of Amon's wicked palace the Holy Spirit shed His blessed influence over the infant heir to Judah's throne, shielding the holy child Josiah from the poison of idolatry, which infected his home, and had eaten into the very heart of the nation. During his minority the young king openly set *his face against* heathenism, seeking after God

with all his heart, and taking as his pattern his forefather David. At the age of twenty, when he had entirely assumed the reins of government, he at once began the arduous task of rooting idolatry out of the land. Not in his own strength could he have undertaken such a mighty work. The idolaters were a powerful body, and were supported by the surrounding nations; moreover, heathenism, in whatever form, possessed an overpowering fascination for his misguided subjects, who were grossly ignorant of their own Divine laws delivered by Moses. But Josiah was not dismayed. The Persian worship of horses and of the sun; the Assyrian of Baal; the Sidonian of Ashtaroth; the Ammonitish of Moloch; the Moabitish of Chemosh, and the Chaldean of the host of heaven—all flourished at the same time in Judah, and all must be exterminated. To accomplish this, the king made a progress, not only through Judah, but through Israel, destroying the groves and idols, and removing every high place which came under his notice. It was whilst in the performance of this sacred duty that he fulfilled a remarkable prophecy delivered more than three hundred years before his birth, in which he is expressly mentioned by name: 'And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the Lord unto Bethel: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. And he cried *against the* altar in the word of the Lord, and said,

O altar, altar! thus saith the Lord, Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee.'[1]

Fourteen generations of the house of David succeeded each other after this prediction, still no king gave his son the name of Josiah, or assumed it himself; and for three centuries that riven altar stood in Bethel, a monument of Jeroboam's daring impiety, and the avenger had not appeared. At length the wicked Amon, all unconscious that he was taking any part in the fulfilment of prophecy, named his son and heir, Josiah, 'the fire, or sacrifice of the Lord.' Strange it would appear to the idolatrous courtiers that their king, a follower, like themselves, of the abominations of the heathen, should give his son a name which seemed to indicate the child's mission as a servant of Jehovah. But Amon's heir was the son of David, spoken of by the Judean prophet, and an irresistible impulse compelled Amon to name the infant prince Josiah. The royal father lay in his bloody grave long before the completion of the prophecy, but may not the queen-mother have sympathised with her son in all his pious undertakings, as she may have been in his earliest years his guide and instructress in all holy things. Her name alone is handed down to us, but that name is expressive,

[1] 1 Kings, xiii. 1, 2.

Jedidah, 'the beloved of the Lord.' Whilst Josiah was occupied in the destruction of all appertaining to idolatry, he was no less interested in another work of piety, the restoration of the temple. Six times had the holy house been pillaged, and the venerable fabric was beginning to show signs of decay. Josiah having appointed overseers of the work, the repairs were carried on with spirit, and it was the happy lot of Hilkiah, the high-priest, whilst examining, we may suppose, a secret part of the building, to discover a lost treasure, the book of God's law, the veritable manuscript of Moses. The precious roll had probably been hidden by some pious priests to save it from destruction during the reign of terror after the death of Hezekiah. Hilkiah took the roll to Shaphan, Josiah's scribe, who read it to the king. So awe-stricken was Josiah when he heard the dreadful threats and denunciations pronounced by God against the Israelites if they fell into idolatry that he rent his clothes, and despatched five messengers of the highest rank to Huldah, the prophetess, to beg of her to inquire of the Lord for him and his guilty subjects. The holy woman sent the messengers back to the king, desiring them to tell him that God had passed sentence upon the idolatrous Jews, that they should be cast out of their country, and deprived of all the privileges they enjoyed; and that because they had not repented when the *prophets* had exhorted them to do so, no prayers

of theirs could now avail to save them from the punishment of their sins; but because Josiah was a righteous man, the Lord would defer the calamities till after his death. With the spirit of a true patriot, Josiah could not let his subjects perish without making a determined effort to save them. He found himself exempted from vengeance by his repentance and deep humility, and trusted that the same mercy would be extended to the people if they likewise repented and humbled themselves. He, therefore, upon receiving the Divine message, convened an assembly of the elders, and with them went up to the temple, and all the men of Judah, and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the priests and the Levites, and all the people, great and small, flocked to the temple; and Josiah read to them 'the book of the covenant that was found in the house of the Lord.'[1] The king then bound himself with an oath 'to walk after the Lord, and to keep His commandments, and His testimonies, and His statutes, with all his heart, and with all his soul, to perform the words of the covenant which are written in this book.'[2] He then compelled all that were present to follow his example. Doubtless there were many copies of the law in circulation when Hezekiah died, but these had been either lost or wilfully mutilated; therefore the finding of the pure original document would be a subject of much thank-

[1] *2 Chron.* xxxiv. 29. [2] Ibid. 31.

fulness to the sincere and zealous servants of God. Among other good works Hezekiah did was the encouragement he gave to a body of men whose business it was to transcribe old records, or to put in writing what had been handed down orally. To this pious king we are, humanly speaking, indebted for the last several chapters of the book of Proverbs. We learn this from the first verse of the twenty-fifth chapter: 'These are also proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah, king of Judah, copied out.' It is thought by Grotius and others that the last chapter of Proverbs was written by Hezekiah himself; that he and Lemuel are the same person; and that the mother who gave Lemuel such good counsel was no other than Abijah, the mother of Hezekiah, and the daughter of the pious priest and prophet Zechariah.

With, if possible, more zeal than ever, after the reading of the sacred roll, Josiah pursued his work of rooting idolatry out of the land. To Bethel, the infamous seat of Israel's pollution, was the attention of the God-fearing king especially directed. Thither he sent the unhallowed ashes of Baal's relics, which he had burned in the fields near Jerusalem, to be laid on the altar Jeroboam had made, and thither he went, according to the word of the Lord, to kindle on the same altar its last fire, fed with the bones of those whom Jeroboam had made priests of the high places. Having *thoroughly* polluted the cursed pile, he broke it

to pieces, and ground it to powder. Among the tombs at Bethel was that of the prophet who had foretold what was then taking place. The Lord had for three hundred and fifty years guarded the sepulchre of His weak, but holy, servant, and had not suffered the wretched Hebrew idolaters to wreak their vengeance upon the remains of the messenger of His wrath. Even the epitaph had for a purpose been preserved from sacrilegious hands. It was still legible, and saved the bones of the prophet from sharing the fate of those occupying the surrounding sepulchres. The inscription caught the eye of Josiah, who asked, 'What title is that I see? And the men of the city told him, It is the sepulchre of the man of God, which came from Judah, and proclaimed these things that thou hast done against the altar of Bethel. And he said, Let him alone; let no man move his bones. So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet that came out of Samaria.'[1] And perhaps they are still there in their rocky tomb, the bones of him who, weary, hungry, and thirsty, had been tempted to disobey God, by going back with the aged prophet of Bethel to his house; and the bones of him whose grief and penitence, when he found the mangled corpse of his holy brother, are so touchingly described. He laid him in his own grave, and said to his sons, 'When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre

[1] 2 Kings, xxiii. 17, 18.

wherein the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones; for the saying which he cried by the word of the Lord against the altar in Bethel, and against all the houses of the high places which are in the cities of Samaria, shall surely come to pass.'[1] The conviction of the truth of all that the Judean prophet had spoken, both to Jeroboam and himself, forced itself upon the lying old Bethelite when he heard the fate of his late guest. He hastened to the scene of death, and found the lion standing over the mangled corpse, as though guarding it from other beasts of prey, until he had arrived who could bear witness to what had been done. The trembling ass stood by. The fierce lion allowed the body to be lifted upon the ass, and then, as we may suppose, returned to its lair and to its own natural ferocious habits. Not probably to feelings of grief, pity, and penitence alone, was the slain prophet indebted for a niche in his seducer's sepulchre at Bethel. The wily Bethelite could not doubt, after what he had seen, that the prediction against the altar and against the city would be fulfilled, and he, doubtless, reasoned that if his bones were intermingled with those of the holy servant of God, they would escape at the appointed time the defilement to which they would otherwise have been subject. He was, as we have so lately noticed, not mistaken.

At the end of six years from the time he set out

[1] 1 Kings, xiii. 31, 32.

on his first progress, Josiah had, as he believed, thoroughly purged his kingdom from every remnant of idolatry. Alas! how deceived he was, the Lord has, through Jeremiah, made known to us. God knew that the reformation was but a surface one. The zeal with which the priests entered into their king's pious schemes blinded the guileless Josiah, but did not cloak their hypocrisy from the searching eye of the Omniscient One, who to His prophets expressed His indignation at the treachery of Judah. Speaking to Jeremiah of Israel, the Lord said: 'Her treacherous sister Judah hath not turned unto Me with her whole heart, but feignedly. The backsliding Israel hath justified herself more than treacherous Judah.'[1] Doubtless there were multitudes who, possessing an innate sense of morality and decency, rejoiced in the change, and in all outward observances were willing to be guided by the powers that then were, but their hearts were untouched. On stony ground, as far as they were concerned, the words of the law read by Josiah fell. The seed sprang up, but being without root, withered with the first blast, and became worse than barren. The patriotic and tender-hearted Josiah was, however, spared the agony of seeing his wretched country relapse into all the misery he had devoted his life to exterminate, and so he went on his holy way, fearlessly uprooting evil, and encouraging all that bore

[1] Jer. iii. 10, 11.

upon it the impress of God. Pre-ordained to the work in which he was engaged, abhorring idolatry, and all that appertained to it, and endowed with zeal, energy, courage, and determination, the dauntless son of David broke down with an irresistible power every barrier that stood in the way of his righteous purpose, and in every village and fenced city, on every hill and plain, must have been found mementoes of his royal progresses; not in the form of triumphal arches and floating banners, but in smouldering ashes, fallen trees, shivered sculpture, and ruined temples. At length the task was completed. The high places Solomon had three centuries and a half before made for his heathenish wives, the princesses of Sidon, Ammon, and Moab, no longer disfigured the verdant slopes and shady groves of Olivet. No longer was heard the roll of the drum in the valley of Hinnom, that fearful sound, which so oft had drowned the agonised shrieks of Moloch's innocent victims, and had blanched the cheek of many a fond mother in Jerusalem. No longer did that den of impurity, the shrine of Ashtaroth, pollute the sacred soil; and no longer were those royal gifts, the sculptured horses and chariots dedicated to the sun, suffered to insult the Lord of all at the very entrance of His Temple. Every image and every altar, no matter how exquisite or how ancient, that Josiah '*spied*,' either in Judah or Israel (the remnant of the latter kingdom was evidently under his dominion), shared the

same fate. Not a feature or limb of chiselled idol—not a stone of heathen altar—was left to be preserved as a relic; for Josiah in his zeal not only broke them to pieces, but ground them to powder, casting their dust to the winds and the waters. Every vestige of the false, cruel, and impure rites of heathenism having been abolished from his kingdom, the pious king then brought in the only true worship. A solemn passover, the first that had been observed for many years, was kept. The precious book of the law, so lately found, guided Josiah as to the time, the place, and the forms necessary for the celebration of the feast. So carefully observed were all the directions given in the sacred roll, that since the days of Samuel the passover had never been celebrated with such ceremony and splendour. It had been neglected so long, that the priests had to be appointed and sanctified to their respective charges, and the Levites were instructed by Josiah out of the recovered book in the duties of their office. Every Hebrew was invited to the feast, and once again Israel and Judah (the former, alas! such as remained of it, a vassal of Assyria) met in the hallowed courts of their heavenly Father's house. That none might want for a suitable offering, Josiah himself gave to the people thirty-three thousand bullocks, besides lambs and kids; the princes and the chief of the Levites likewise *contributed liberally.* With pious haste Josiah must

have cleansed the temple, and have made preparations for the feast on a scale of such magnificence; for we read that it was in the eighteenth year of his reign the book of the law was found, and again that it was in the eighteenth year of his reign that this passover was kept. After this Josiah reigned in peace thirteen years: 'And like unto him was there no king before him that turned to the Lord with all his heart, and with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; neither after him arose there any like him.'[1] But a heavy weight must have laid upon his loving, patriotic heart, notwithstanding the fact that his subjects all the days of his life 'departed not from following the Lord, the God of their fathers.'[2] The doom of his country he could not avert, and that awful doom in all its horrors was laid bare to him. Allowing the possibility that he was not in possession of the writings of Isaiah and those of Isaiah's contemporaries, Jeremiah, who began to prophesy in the thirteenth year of his reign, lived near Jerusalem, if not actually in the city; and his inspired denunciations, warnings, threatenings, and exhortations, to his treacherous countrymen would reach the ears of the king and the faithful servants about the court. And there was the dauntless prophetess Huldah, besides a whole college of seers in Jerusalem. To these inspired ones would the heart of *the pious* and anxious Josiah ever turn, hoping

[1] *2 Kings*, xxiii. 25. [2] 2 Chron. xxxiv. 33.

that he might hear fall from their lips some palliation of the dreadful punishment pronounced against his beloved kingdom; but in vain, save that in the distant horizon, beyond a dismal scene of famine, pestilence, blood, and fire, sinking into silence and desolation, was revealed to him a gleam of light, which he knew would burst into the glorious dawn of freedom and restoration. On that far distant blessed ray of brightness rested the only hope of the pious Hebrew. We must suppose Josiah to have been well acquainted with the chronicles of his dominion, and that all the particulars connected with the visit of the Babylonish ambassadors to Hezekiah were familiar to him. He would not, therefore, be ignorant that at the hand of Babylon, not that of Nineveh, the latter, so long a rod used by the Almighty for the chastising of His rebellious children, Judah must meet her doom. With alarm, consequently, would Josiah observe the changes which not long before his death took place in the Assyrian kingdom. The king of Babylon and the king of Media entered into a confederacy against Nineveh. They joined their forces together, besieged the city, and after a siege of three years took it, and destroyed the greater part of it. From this time Babylon became the sole metropolis of the Assyrian empire—the 'hammer'[1] which was to strike Judah the fatal blow. With trembling hearts would the holy pro-

[2] Jer. L. 23.

phets and the rest of the faithful ones in Palestine hear that Nineveh had fallen, and that Babylon had suddenly become a mighty power, to be dreaded by all her enemies. The Nineveh of the Bible—that 'exceeding great city'[1]—that 'rejoicing city that dwelt carelessly, that said in her heart, I am, and there is none besides me,'[2] disappeared from the sight of men. Out of her ruins was built on the other side of the Tigris a city bearing her name, but the Nineveh of the patriarchal days became 'a desolation, a place for beasts to lie down in!'[3]

Not from inspired, but from good authority, we obtain the few following particulars of the fall of Nineveh. The investment of the city by the allied armies of Babylon and Media caused but little alarm to the careless Ninevites, who believed their city, on account of its great strength and size, (it was sixty miles in circumference, was surrounded by stupendous walls, on which were 1500 garrisoned towers,) would be able to resist all attacks of its enemies. But the Lord of the universe had pronounced her sentence, and provided the means for the carrying of it out. The river Tigris overflowed its banks, and throwing down part of the wall, an entrance into the doomed city was effected by the foe. The luxuriousness and effeminacy of the Ninevites had become proverbial. They 'dwelt carelessly.' Secure, as they supposed, in their

[1] *Jonah*, iii. 3. [2] Zeph. ii. 15. [3] Ibid.

apparently impregnable city, they gave themselves up to excess even whilst the enemy was at their gates, and when the final assault was made a great feast was being celebrated, and the soldiers were overcome with wine. There was an ancient oracle that Nineveh should not be taken till the river became an enemy to the city. When the Tigris, consequently, overflowed its banks, and broke down the wall to the extent, it is said, of twenty furlongs, the king (Sardanapalus, it is supposed it was,) believed the oracle was fulfilled, and the city doomed. He, therefore, built a large funereal pile in the palace, and collecting together his wealth, his wives, his concubines, and his eunuchs, set the palace on fire, and perished with them all. So died the last king of Nineveh. Almost destroyed by fire and by water, the once gorgeous city sank rapidly into decay, and vast shapeless heaps of rubbish, sand, and soil, were ere long all that remained to sight of her who so long reigned Queen of the East. What said the Galilean prophet Nahum (the comforter) of the destroyer of Israel, shortly after his unhappy country had been ravaged by the Assyrians, and a hundred years before the fall of Nineveh? 'With an overrunning flood He will make an utter end of the place thereof, and darkness shall pursue His enemies. What do ye imagine against the Lord? He will make an utter end: affliction shall not rise up the *second time.* For while they be folden together

as thorns, and while they are drunken as drunkards, they shall be devoured as stubble fully dry.'[1] 'And the Lord hath given a commandment concerning thee, that no more of thy name be sown: out of the house of thy gods will I cut off the graven image and the molten image: I will make thy grave; for thou art vile.'[2] 'The chariots shall rage in the streets, they shall justle one against another in the broad ways: they shall seem like torches, they shall run like the lightnings. He shall recount his worthies (gallants): they shall stumble in their walk; they shall make haste to the wall thereof, and the defence shall be prepared. The gates of the rivers shall be opened, and the palace shall be dissolved.'[3] 'And I will cast abominable filth upon thee, and make thee vile, and set thee as a gazing-stock. And it shall come to pass, that all they that look upon thee shall flee from thee, and say, Nineveh is laid waste.'[4]

For two thousand years Nineveh lay in her sandy grave, despised, neglected, and forgotten; her sepulchre the home of deadly reptiles, wild beasts, and doleful creatures, and the reputed haunt of evil spirits. No shepherd folded his flocks near the accursed spot, but hurried away from it, unconsciously fulfilling the prophecy of Nahum, 'All they that look upon thee shall flee from thee,'[5] for they knew not that the desolate heaps were Nine-

[1] *Nah. i.* 8–10. [2] Ibid. 14. [3] Ibid. ii. 4–6.
[4] *Ibid.* iii. 6, 7. [5] Ibid. iii. 7.

veh. And so for two thousand years Nineveh remained undisturbed in the grave her sins had dug for her, but where that grave lay was unknown. Tradition said that it was somewhere on the banks of the Tigris, a thousand miles away from the tracks of ordinary travel. At length 'a French *savant* and a wandering English scholar, urged by a noble inspiration, sought the seat of the once powerful empire, and, searching till they found the dead city, threw off its shroud of sand and ruin, and revealed once more to an astonished and curious world the temples, the palaces, and the idols; the representations of war, and the triumphs of peaceful art of the ancient Assyrians. The Nineveh of Scripture, the Nineveh of the oldest historians; the Nineveh—twin-sister of Babylon—glorying in a civilisation of pomp and power, all traces of which were believed to be gone; the Nineveh in which the captive tribes of Israel had laboured and wept, was, after a sleep of twenty centuries, again brought to light. The proofs of ancient splendour were again beheld by living eyes, and, by the skill of the draughtsman and the pen of antiquarian travellers, made known to the world.'[1] We cannot venture upon the subject of the Ninevite relics. The gigantic statues, the sculptured slabs, the idols, the royal records, the jewels, and other long-buried treasures that have been exhumed, and borne across the great desert and over the great

[1] *Bonomi's* 'Nineveh and its Palaces.'

sea to our shores, to be gazed upon with deep emotion by the lover of sacred history. The theme is an inexhaustible one, interesting alike to the antiquarian, to the historian, and to the Biblical student.

To return to unhappy Judah. Her hour was come, but her good king Josiah must be safely sheltered in the peaceful home of the blessed before the storm burst. Easily was the silver cord broken, though the vigorous body, still in its prime, promised many years of health and strength. In the thirty-first year of Josiah's reign, Pharaoh-Necho came up out of Egypt to war against Babylonia. The king of Judah thought it his duty to oppose the march of the Egyptian army, and for this purpose met the swarthy host in the valley of Megiddo, and at once prepared to give them battle. He was disguised in his war-chariot, and as he was arranging his troops, an arrow shot at random by an Egyptian struck him. 'Have me away, for I am sore wounded,'[1] he exclaimed to his servants. He was removed to another chariot, in which he died. His corpse was taken to Jerusalem, and was buried 'in his own sepulchre,'[2] the obsequies being performed, Josephus says, with extraordinary honours. Whatever the relief of the hypocritical portion of Josiah's subjects may have been at the removal of so zealous a defender of the only true worship, the grief of the nation generally was beyond expres-

[1] *2 Chron.* xxxv. 23. [2] 2 Kings, xxiii. 30.

sion. 'Jeremiah lamented for Josiah.'[1] The prophet wrote an elegy on the death of the king, which was appointed to be sung at the periodical mourning for the loss of so religious, just, and virtuous a prince. It is to be deplored that this elegy, in which the Hebrews joined with such heartfelt anguish, is not now extant. Near the spot where Josiah was wounded (Hadadrimmon) the mourners assembled to chant the funeral obsequies of the lamented Josiah, and to bewail the national calamity. So bitter were the lamentations, that, 'as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon,'[2] became a proverb to express the most violent sorrow. Too well did the inspired servants of God know how much cause there was for fear and anxiety, now that the shield which had been held up between Judah and the sword of vengeance was laid in the dust.

[1] 2 Chron. xxxv. 25. [2] Zech. xii. 11.

CHAPTER III.

AS lamenting the death of Josiah, we are introduced by the sacred chronicler to the loving, sensitive, devout, sympathising, and, at the same time, bold and intrepid Jeremiah,—prophet, priest, patriot, and poet. Such a conspicuous part did Jeremiah take in the fearful death-struggles of his country, that in tracing the rapid downfall of Judah after she lost her last pious king, we unavoidably compile the touching and deeply interesting biography of her second great prophet. Before he was born the Lord had sanctified Jeremiah, and had ordained him 'a prophet unto the nations;'[1] and when he was but a youth, he received his commission from the Most High. With the meekness and humility for which he was ever noted, he pleaded his inability to speak publicly on account of his youthfulness. 'Ah, Lord God! (he exclaimed) behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.'[2] But the Lord said, 'Say not, I am a child: for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee thou shalt

[1] Jer. i. 5. [2] Ibid. 6.

speak. Be not afraid of their faces: for I am with thee to deliver thee.'[1] The Almighty then put forth His hand and touched the lips of the timid, chosen one, saying, 'Behold, I have put My words in thy mouth.'[2] Jeremiah then received his sad commission. The Lord revealed to him the secret of his future career. A life of martyrdom lay before the newly ordained one, a struggle against kings, priests, and people. 'Thou, therefore, gird up thy loins, and arise, and speak unto them all that I command thee: be not dismayed at their faces, lest I confound thee before them. For, behold, I have made thee this day a defenced city, and an iron pillar, and brazen walls against the whole land, against the kings of Judah, against the princes thereof, against the priests thereof, and against the people of the land. And they shall fight against thee; for I am with thee, saith the Lord, to deliver thee.'[3] And this revelation was made at the time when the reformation throughout the land was being carried on so vigorously by the zealous Josiah. Jeremiah shrank not from his melancholy office; he at once took the burden of his country's woes upon his shoulders, though for the next eighteen years he was not called upon to stand forth in her defence. Born at Anathoth, a city of the priests, it is very probable that he, till trouble pressed heavily upon his beloved country, resided in the home of his fathers. His name

[1] Jer. i. 7, 8. [2] Ibid. 9. [3] Ibid. 17–19.

never being mentioned in connexion with the reformation, it is supposed that he held aloof from the work that was going on. But for the word of God that had been spoken unto him he might unsuspectingly have borne his part among the reforming priests; but his eyes had been opened to the falsehood and lust of rule that were at work under the form of zeal, and his righteous soul shrank from such hypocrisy. Not, however, in silence could he contemplate the treachery of his countrymen; the first few chapters of his sad, sad book show this. His pleadings, his denunciations, his bitter invectives, and his exhortations, couched in language so touching, so passionate, and so beautiful, tell us how keenly he felt the degradation of his countrymen. Though he is not mentioned in the chronicles of Judah till after the death of Josiah, it is generally believed that it was by his advice that the king endeavoured to oppose the march of the Egyptian army on its way to the Euphrates. From the time Jeremiah is spoken of as taking a conspicuous part in the great national questions of his day, we find him ever maintaining the same policy, which was to conciliate as far as possible the Babylonians. He knew that his countrymen must ere long fall into their hands, and that Babylonia would be for the space of seventy years a land of captivity to the Hebrews, and that it was the wisest course to irritate as little *as possible* the pre-ordained conquerors of Judah,

so that in their exile the captives might meet with merciful treatment. It is only conjectured that Jeremiah persuaded Josiah to go up against Pharaoh-necho. The former in what he did may have been influenced *solely* by a sense of honour. From the time of Manasseh's restoration the kings of Judah, in consideration of benefits conferred upon the nation by Babylon, were bound by oath to adhere to that country, and to defend the borders of the empire near Palestine against the enemies of Babylon —the Egyptians especially. To none of the Judean prophets, so far as we are aware, was revealed what would be the issue of the fatal battle in Megiddo; only the heathen, Pharaoh-necho, seems to have had a presentiment of the result. He was evidently unwilling to fight against Josiah, not from any misgiving as to the strength of his own forces, but from a humane wish to save unnecessary bloodshed. He sent ambassadors to Josiah to reason with the king upon what he (Necho) considered Josiah's uncalled-for interference, but Josiah would listen to no reasoning on the subject, and at once prepared to give battle. An engagement, it is presumed, took place after Josiah was slain, in which the Judean army was completely routed. And now Judah hastened rapidly to her ruin. Pharaoh-necho after his victory over the Hebrews pursued his march to the Euphrates. He attacked Carchemish, an important Babylonian city, which commanded the ordinary passage of the great

river, took it, and secured it to himself with a good garrison. He then directed his atention to Judah, and encamped at Riblah, a place on the great road between Palestine and Assyria. Riblah was a city of Hamath, a kingdom which lay in the lovely valley of the Orontes, and which had for centuries been constantly changing masters, now independent, now included in the dominions of the kings of Israel, and now in the power of the Assyrians. At the time of which we are writing, Hamath had sunk into insignificance, but Riblah, situated, as is supposed, on the east bank of the river, was a convenient place for kings to remain in whilst directing their armies against the neighbouring states, and there Necho established himself till he had to his satisfaction arranged the affairs of Judah, which he considered entirely in his power. His indignation was roused at finding that the people of Judah had without consulting him taken 'Jehoahaz the son of Josiah, and made him king in his father's stead in Jerusalem.'[1] Necho at once deposed the new monarch, ordering him to be brought to him at Riblah (alas! how many wretched Hebrews afterwards trod that same weary way to Riblah), where he was put into chains. Jehoahaz was a wicked prince. During his short reign of three months, 'he did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done.'[2] By 'his

[1] 2 Chron. xxxvi. 1. [2] 2 Kings, xxiii. 32.

fathers' are to be understood his wicked forefathers, Ahaz, Manasseh, and Amon. He had been unlawfully placed upon the throne by the people in preference to his elder half-brother Eliakim. The king of Egypt levied a contribution of a hundred talents of silver, and one talent of gold upon Jerusalem; he then made Eliakim, the son of Josiah, king in the room of Josiah his father, and turned his name to Jehoiakim.[1] The account of the wars carried on by this Egyptian king against the Jews and Babylonians is confirmed by the discoveries of the great traveller Belzoni among the tombs of the Egyptian sovereigns. In one of the numerous apartments of the tomb of Psammethes, the son of Pharaoh-necho, Belzoni found a sculptured group describing the march of a military and triumphal procession with three different sets of prisoners, who are evidently Jews, Persians or Chaldeans, and Ethiopians. The procession is headed by four red men with white kirtles, followed by a hawk-headed divinity. These are Egyptians, apparently released from captivity, and returning home under the protection of their national divinity. Then follow four white men in striped and fringed kirtles, with black beards, and with a simple white fillet round their black hair. These are Jews, and might be taken for the portraits of those who at this day walk the streets of London. After them come three white men with smaller beards and curled

[1] Kings, xxiii. 34.

whiskers, with double-spreading plumes on their heads, tattooed, and wearing robes or mantles spotted like the skins of wild beasts. These are Persians or Chaldeans. Lastly come four Negroes, with large circular earrings, and white petticoats, supported by a belt over the shoulder. These are Ethiopians.

How quickly did black and heavy clouds gather over Jerusalem after the death of her pious and prudent king. But three months, or rather more, had Josiah slept in his peaceful grave, when confusion, discontent, idolatry, civil strife, and vice reigned where all had been, outwardly at least, harmony, piety, order, and prosperity. One of the sons of Josiah already in chains at Riblah; another bearing but the name of king, and hated, we may readily believe, by his subjects, who tolerated him only because they feared their real master, Necho; heathenism in all its vile forms restored, for, like his brother, 'Jehoiakim did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done.'[1] After he had established Jehoiakim on the throne of Judah, Necho returned with great triumph to Egypt, carrying with him the unfortunate Jehoahaz, who died in captivity. In the exquisite funeral dirge found in the nineteenth chapter of Ezekiel, the captive prophet alludes to Jerusalem, and the hapless sons of *Josiah* :—

[1] 2 Kings, xxiii. 37.

'Moreover, take thou up a lamentation for the Princes of Israel, and say :
What was thy mother ! A lioness :
She lay down among lions ;
In the midst of young lions she nourished her whelps.
And she brought up one of her whelps ; he became a young lion ;
And he learnt to seize the prey ; he devoured men.
The nations also heard of him ; he was taken in their pit ;
And they brought him in chains unto the land of Egypt.
When she saw that he was become weak, her hope was lost ;
And she took another of her whelps, and she made him a young lion ;
And he went up and down among the lions; he became a young lion ;
And he learned to seize the prey ; he devoured men ;
And he brought evil upon their palaces, and laid waste their cities ;
And the land was desolate, and all that was therein, from the voice of his roaring ;
Then the nations set themselves against him on every side from the provinces,
And spread their net over him ; he was taken in their pit.
And they put him in ward in chains,
And brought him to the king of Babylon, who brought him into strong holds ;
That his voice might no more be heard
Upon the mountains of Israel.'[1]

Jehoiakim's accession to the throne seems to have been the signal for Jeremiah to enter upon the dangerous task God had assigned to him—a struggle against kings, princes, priests, and people, ending only, as is believed, with his life. Jehoiakim was not suffered to commence his infamous reign

[1] *Ezek. xix. 1–9.* Archbishop Newcombe's translation.

without an earnest appeal and awful warning from the lips of God's ambassador, who was ordered to go to the palace, and by exhortations, promises, and threats, to induce, if possible, Jehoiakim and his court to repent. Jeremiah hesitated not. Has painter never attempted to depict the noble, dauntless prophet as he stood in the presence of his sovereign to pass judgment upon him who, by a nod, could command his officers to silence for ever the daring, unwelcome intruder? Proof it is that the young king was not then thoroughly hardened, or Jeremiah, when he had executed his commission, would surely have been led from the palace to the dungeon, or perhaps to death. Who can read the speech of Jeremiah to Jehoiakim unmoved? With all due respect to his earthly sovereign he addressed the king on his throne, and we see, as we read the oration, the expression and changing countenance of the speaker. The pathos expressed in every look and word as he exhorted the king and his ministers to repent. Then follows the conditional promise (oh! even then Judah might have been saved): 'If ye do this thing indeed, then shall there enter in by the gates of this house kings sitting upon the throne of David, riding in chariots and on horses, he, and his servants, and his people.'[1] Awful was the threat which followed, spoken, as it would be in tones no longer appealing or gentle, as with kindling eye the intrepid

[1] Jer. xxii. 4.

patriot looked round upon the nobles and princes assembled, and read in their contemptuous and defiant countenances that there was no hope for his country. Bowed with grief, his voice would tremble as he spoke of the desolation of his beloved Jerusalem. How touching his lament for the fate of Jehoahaz: 'Weep ye not for the dead, neither bemoan him: but weep sore for him that goeth away: for he shall return no more, nor see his native country. For thus saith the Lord touching Shallum (Jehoahaz) the son of Josiah king of Judah, which reigned instead of Josiah his father, which went forth out of this place, He shall not return thither any more: but he shall die in the place whither they have led him captive, and shall see this land no more.'[1] With a burst of indignation, as though his spirit was roused at the remembrance of all Josiah's goodness, contrasting so sadly with the wickedness of his sons, the prophet addressed himself especially to the king: 'Shalt thou reign, because thou closest thyself in cedar? Did not thy father eat and drink, and do judgment and justice, and then it was well with him? He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well with him: was not this to know me? saith the Lord. But thine eyes and thine heart are not but for thy covetousness, and for to shed innocent blood, and for oppression, and for violence, to do it. Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning

[1] Jer. xxii. 10–12.

Jehoiakim the son of Josiah king of Judah; They shall not lament for him, saying, Ah my brother! or, Ah sister! they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord! or, Ah his glory! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem.'[1] Not only upon Jehoiakim was judgment pronounced, but upon his family. 'As I live, saith the Lord, though Coniah (Jehoiachin) the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were the signet upon my right hand, yet would I pluck thee thence; and I will give thee into the hand of them that seek thy life, and into the hand of them whose face thou fearest, even into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon, and into the hand of the Chaldeans. And I will cast thee out, and thy mother that bare thee, into another country, where ye were not born; and there shall ye die. But to the land whereunto they desire to return, thither shall they not return. Is this man Coniah a despised broken idol? is he a vessel wherein is no pleasure? wherefore are they cast out, he and his seed, and are cast into a land which they know not?'[2] Then follows the judgment upon the house of David. Awfully grand must have been the prophet's aspect and bearing as with countenance deadly pale, arms extended, and eyes glowing with the fire of inspiration, he, in tones full of power and pathos invoked the world to listen to the Divine *sentence:* 'O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of

[1] *Jer.* xxii. 15–19. [2] Ibid. 24–28.

the Lord. Thus saith the Lord, Write ye this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days : for no man of his seed shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Juhah.'[1] The word rendered 'childless,' will admit of the more general sense of deprived, destitute, or desolate. Both the twenty-eighth and thirtieth verses imply that Jeconiah had offspring. He appears in the genealogy of our Saviour as the father of 'Salathiel,'[2] and two of his sons are mentioned in the first book of Chronicles. The prophecy, therefore, must be understood to express simply that Coniah, or Jehoiachin, would be an heirless king, that his children would never succeed to the throne of David, or rule over Judah. From the time that this sentence was pronounced, there is an end to the power and lustre of the house of David, for as to the precarious, tumultuous, and inglorious reign of Zedekiah, or the transient delegated authority of Zerubbabel after it, they make no exception of any moment to the perfect execution of the Divine judgment. The people were restored, but not Judah. The kingdom fell where it lay prostrate till Christ came and repaired its ruins on a new foundation in His greater kingdom.

Very shortly after Jeremiah had appeared before the king he was commanded by the Lord to 'stand in the court of the Lord's house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in

[1] *Jer. xxii. 29, 30.* [2] Matt. i. 12.

the Lord's house,'[1] all the words that God commanded him to speak. We may infer, that as people from all the cities of Judah had assembled in the Temple, it was an annual festival, and that consequently there was a vast gathering. Once more the prophet preached repentance, with promises, threats, and judgments. The priests had by this time thrown off the mask of hypocrisy they had so long worn; and 'when Jeremiah had made an end of speaking all that the Lord had commanded him to speak unto all the people, that the priests, and the prophets, and all the people took him, saying, Thou shalt surely die. Why hast thou prophesied in the name of the Lord, saying, This house shall be like Shiloh, and this city shall be desolate without an inhabitant? And all the people were gathered against Jeremiah in the house of the Lord. When the princes of Judah heard these things, then they came up from the king's house unto the house of the Lord, and sat down in the entry of the new gate of the Lord's house. Then spake the priests and the prophets unto the princes and to all the people, saying, This man is worthy to die; for he hath prophesied against this city, as ye have heard with your ears.'[2] The dauntless prophet, whom nothing could intimidate, made no effort to defend himself, save the one plea, 'The Lord sent me,'[3] and this proved sufficient. Far dearer to him than his own life was the

[1] *Jer. xxvi. 2.* [2] Ibid. 8–11. [3] Ibid. 12.

salvation of his country, and, regardless of his danger, he seized the opportunity of again exhorting the princes to repent. 'As for me (he concluded), behold, I am in your hand: do with me as seemeth good and meet unto you. But know ye for certain, that if ye put me to death, ye shall surely bring innocent blood upon yourselves, and upon this city, and upon the inhabitants thereof: for of a truth the Lord hath sent me unto you to speak all these words in your ears. Then said the princes and all the people unto the priests and to the prophets, This man is not worthy to die: for he hath spoken to us in the name of the Lord our God. Then rose up certain of the elders of the land, and spake to all the assembly of the people, saying, Micah the Morasthite prophesied in the days of Hezekiah king of Judah, and spake to all the people of Judah, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts, Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest.[1] Did Hezekiah king of Judah and all Judah put him at all to death? did he not fear the Lord, and besought the Lord, and the Lord repented Him of the evil which He had pronounced against them? Thus might we procure great evil against our souls.'[2] It was a wise and happy thought of the elders to remind the council of the humility and justice of the beloved king Hezekiah, under whose

[1] *Mic. iii. 12.* [2] Jer. xxvi. 14–19.

mild administration the nation had enjoyed such rest and prosperity as she had not known for years before, and whose memory was still precious. Yet the voice of the few faithful ones might not have turned the balance in favour of the prisoner, had not Ahikam, an influential member of the Sanhedrim, befriended Jeremiah, so 'that they should not give him into the hand of the people to put him to death.'[1] Ahikam was the son of Shaphan, Josiah's secretary, and probably the friendship between Jeremiah and the family of Shaphan, which remained unbroken till Judah was no more, had been contracted in the latter part of Josiah's reign at the Judean court. Four of the sons of the royal secretary were men of influence in Jerusalem, and the friendship of three of them proved very useful to the persecuted servant of God. Ahikam has been already mentioned. He was the father of the unfortunate prince Gedaliah. Elasah was one of two captives intrusted by Jeremiah with letters to those Hebrews who had been already carried to Babylon. The third, Gemariah, was one of Jehoiakim's counsellors. The fourth, Jaazaniah, was, alas! one of the seventy elders Ezekiel saw in a vision secretly offering incense to idols. He is supposed to have been president of the Sanhedrim,[2] or chief

[1] Jer. xxvi. 24.

[2] The word 'Sanhedrin,' or 'Sunedrion,' is, without *doubt, of* Greek derivation. The Rabbis have endeavoured *to paraphase it* as 'Sin' (Sinai) 'haderin,' those who repeat *or explain the* law.

tribunal of the Jews. Though Jeremiah was, through the intercession of the princes and his friend Ahikam, permitted to live after the wicked priests had condemned him, it is evident that persecution to the death prevailed throughout the land against those prophets who executed their Divine commission in predicting the fate of Judah and Jerusalem. One of these martyrs is mentioned by name, Urijah. He prophesied in the first year of Jehoiakim against the city and against the land, 'according to all the words of Jeremiah. And when Jehoiakim the king, with all his mighty men, and all the princes, heard his words, the king sought to put him to death: but when Urijah heard it, he was afraid, and fled, and went into Egypt.'[1] Was there no hiding-place among the mountains of Judah in which the persecuted one could conceal himself until the reign of terror was over? It seems not. So across the desert of Beer-sheba Urijah fled to seek shelter among the enemies of his country, but his hiding-place was made known unto Jehoiakim, who sent one of the Judean princes, Elnathan, his father-in-law, 'and certain men with him, into Egypt. And they fetched forth Urijah out of Egypt, and brought him unto Jehoiakim the king; who slew him with the sword, and cast his dead body into the graves of the common people.'[2] It was not long before bodily torment was added to the agony of mind

[1] *Jer. xxvi. 20, 21.* [2] *Ibid. 22, 23.*

the martyr Jeremiah was called upon to endure. No prophet before had borne mental sufferings so great as those Jeremiah passed through, and no marvel that his character and writings were impressed with deep and lasting melancholy. Full of the tenderest affection for his fellow-countrymen, whilst he abhorred their sins, he was ready to lay down his life for them, and yet had to appear among them as a prophet of evil, dashing to the ground the false hopes by which they were buoyed. He could not encourage them to resist or hope; he could only preach to them submission and repentance, and that at a time when they were most rebellious, self-willed, and hardened. When his whole soul was filled with the most devoted patriotism, he was looked upon as a traitor, because he believed that the only safety for his country lay in her *yielding* herself to the power of Babylon. From any alliance with Egypt he ever turned his face. He wavered not, though to human reasoning it appeared, so long as Egypt was in the ascendancy, an unaccountable delusion, and brought upon his devoted head the accusation of treachery. If it were really by his advice that Josiah went on his calamitous expedition against Pharaoh-necho, and that Jehoahaz was, in opposition to Necho, hastily placed upon the throne of Judah, the princes and people would be in no mood to listen patiently to *the same* counsel. In the eighteenth chapter of *Jeremiah* we find the prophet praying God to

punish his enemies for conspiring to work his ruin. 'Come (said they), and let us devise devices against Jeremiah, for the law shall not perish from the priest, nor counsel from the wise, nor the word from the prophet. Come, and let us smite him with the tongue, and let us not give heed to any of his words.'[1] The perfidy of these ungrateful wretches, whom Jeremiah had tried to save, reached the ears of their intended victim, whose indignation was roused to the utmost. He appealed to the Lord, who heard the cry of His servant, and commanded him to get an earthen vessel, and then 'take of the ancients of the people, and of the ancients of the priests,'[2] to the valley of the son of Hinnom, and there foretell the desolation of Judah. Jeremiah did as he was bidden, and in the accursed valley stood with the ancients of the people (the members of the great council), and the ancients of the priests (the heads of the four-and-twenty courses), whom he had summoned to hear the awful judgments pronounced upon them and the nation. In these words he addressed the assembly, 'Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will bring evil upon this place, the which whosoever heareth, his ears shall tingle. Because they have forsaken Me, and have estranged this place, and have burned incense in it unto other gods, whom neither they nor their fathers have known, nor the

[1] *Jer. xviii. 18.* [2] Ibid. xix. 1.

kings of Judah, and have filled this place with the blood of innocents; they have built also the high places of Baal, to burn their sons with fire for burnt-offerings unto Baal, which I commanded not, nor spake it, neither came it into My mind. Therefore, behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that this place shall no more be called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter. And I will make void the counsel of Judah and Jerusalem in this place; and I will cause them to fall by the sword before their enemies, and by the hands of them that seek their lives: and their carcases will I give to be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth. And I will make this city desolate, and an hissing; every one that passeth thereby shall be astonished and hiss because of all the plagues thereof. And I will cause them to eat the flesh of their sons and the flesh of their daughters, and they shall eat every one the flesh of his friend in the siege and straitness wherewith their enemies, and they that seek their lives, shall straiten them.'[1] At this point of the awful proclamation the prophet, as God had directed him, broke the earthen pitcher into fragments, and then continued, 'Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Even so will I break this people and this city, as one breaketh a potter's vessel, that cannot be made whole again: and they *shall bury* them in Tophet, till there be no place

[1] Jer. xix. 3–9.

to bury. Thus will I do unto this place, saith the Lord, and to the inhabitants thereof, and even make this city as Tophet: and the houses of Jerusalem, and the houses of the kings of Judah, shall be defiled as the place of Tophet, because of all the houses upon whose roofs they have burned incense unto all the host of heaven, and have poured out drink-offerings unto other gods.'[1] When Jeremiah had done speaking, he returned into the city, and 'stood in the court of the Lord's house; and said to all the people, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring upon this city and upon all her towns all the evil that I have pronounced against it, because they have hardened their necks, that they might not hear My words.'[2] The Lord stood between Jeremiah and the hardened, hypocritical elders and priests, restraining them from wreaking their vengeance upon the intrepid denouncer of their sins, and the deliverer of the awful sentence God had pronounced upon them. No hope of repentance had the inspired patriot for these aged sinners to whom the deluded people looked up, and by whom the nation in a great measure was guided for evil. The prophet pleaded not with them, but vehemently accused and condemned them. For eighteen long years he had witnessed their hypocrisy, and loathed it. Now the mask they wore in the days of Josiah was cast aside; for idolatry and

[1] *Jer. xix. 11–13.* [2] Ibid. 14, 15.

vice were rampant throughout the land, and the heads of the people revelled in iniquity. There is no intimation that Jeremiah's listeners were even for a moment awed by the Divine proclamation. We only know that the prophet returned to the city unharmed. That ever-memorable day did not, however, pass without God's faithful messenger tasting of the bitter cup of persecution in the form of personal insult and suffering. A miscreant of the name of Pashur, chief governor of the Temple, heard what Jeremiah had prophesied. 'Then Pashur smote Jeremiah the prophet, and put him in the stocks that were in the high gate of Benjamin, which was by the house of the Lord. And it came to pass on the morrow, that Pashur brought forth Jeremiah out of the stocks. Then said Jeremiah unto him, The Lord hath not called thy name Pashur, but Magor-Missabib (fear round about). For thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will make thee a terror to thyself, and to all thy friends: and they shall fall by the sword of their enemies, and thine eyes shall behold it: and I will give all Judah into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall carry them captive into Babylon, and shall slay them with the sword. Moreover, I will deliver all the strength of this city, and all the labours thereof, and all the precious things thereof, and all the treasures of the kings of Judah, will I give into *the hand* of their enemies, which shall spoil them, *and take* them, and carry them to Babylon. And

thou, Pashur, and all that dwell in thine house, shall go into captivity: and thou shalt come to Babylon, and there thou shalt die, and shalt be be buried there, thou, and all thy friends, to whom thou hast prophesied lies.' What ailedst thee, great Pashur, that thou didst not strike thy accuser and judge to the earth? Thy prisoner was at thy mercy; for his limbs, if unfettered, were weak and cramped from their cruel usage in thy accursed stocks. Did that flashing eye, fixed upon thee in bold defiance, awe thee? or was there more than human power in the voice that thundered forth thy sentence? or were thy hands, which only yesterday had smitten God's holy messenger, now powerless, as though suddenly stricken with palsy? or sawest thou the angel that stood between thee and him whose inspired tongue thou wouldest gladly have torn from its roots? Jeremiah, we infer, was set at liberty without further molestation, but all our tenderest sympathies are excited for the tried and faithful one, when we read of the total prostration of mind, and probably of body also, which followed the trials he had just passed through. When once again alone, as we may suppose, in his solitary dwelling, the mighty spirit that had sustained him through danger and insult forsook him for a time, and he abandoned himself to the most violent grief, amounting to despair. He had no loving wife to whom he could unburden

[1] Jer. xx. 2–6.

his soul; for the Lord had in mercy forbidden him to marry, that he might be spared the sorrow of seeing his children perish in the day of calamity, or become captives. His relatives at Anathoth were among his bitter enemies, and so to the world he poured forth his lamentations. Sympathy he sought, and till time shall be no more, the tender sympathy of all the faithful will be with the sorely tried prophet of Judah, Jeremiah. Blessed saint—type of Him who suffered and died for us—can we read unmoved the touching story of thy long martyrdom? As in thy sad history all thy meekness, compassion, patriotism, humility, faith, and intrepidity are revealed to us, our hearts burn with love and admiration, while with reverence we think and speak of thee, the mighty ambassador of the Most High.

Whilst Judah was hurrying on her own destruction, the two great powers, Egypt and Babylon, were performing their part in the preparations for the last scenes of the tragedy. In the third year of Jehoiakim's reign, Nabopollasar, king of Babylon, the conqueror of Nineveh, having grown old and infirm and unable to take any active part in warlike proceedings, sent his son the great Nebuchadnezzar against such parts of his dominions as had been either subdued by Pharaoh-necho or had revolted to the Egyptian king. The following year, *Nebuchadnezzar* having overthrown the forces of *Necho at Car*chemish, marched towards Palestine.

On the approach of the terrible Assyrians, all who lived in villages, or 'unfenced' cities, or in tents, took refuge in Jerusalem. In consequence of this we have the interesting episode of the Rechabites given with such beautiful simplicity by Jeremiah. The family of the Rechabites were descendants of Jethro, the father-in-law of Moses. They seem to have accompanied the Hebrews during their wanderings and to have entered Canaan with them, but they never settled in any towns, preferring a life of perfect freedom, and betook themselves to the wilderness of Judah, but one of their tribe, Heber, whose wife, Jael, slew Sisera, wandered to the north, pitching his tent on the plain of Esdraelon. This nomadic tribe were worshippers of the true God, but still did not conform to Jewish rites. It has ever been deemed a great difficulty in political economy to maintain an empire within an empire, but the Rechabites solved the problem, for they preserved an independent existence among the Israelites for nearly one thousand years, and though neither acknowledging their worship nor their laws, were suffered to remain undisturbed by ambition or religious persecution. They accomplished this result in the following manner: About five hundred years after their settlement in Canaan, one of their chiefs, Jonadab, gained such influence over them, that the rules he gave them were ever after followed. He saw that his people were but a handful among *a more powerful* people, and likely soon to be

swallowed up by their neighbours, so in order that they might maintain their independence, he enjoined them 'not to drink wine.'[1] This was to save them from luxury and intemperance which would soon lead them to destruction. He also commanded them not to till the ground, nor to have any houses, nor to dwell in cities, so that they might have no riches to tempt others to make war upon them. Jonadab appears only once in the historical narrative, and that is when Jehu is exercising his newly acquired power by massacring the entire race of Ahab. Jonadab, at that time head of the Rechabite community, waylaid Jehu and saluted him. The Arab chief declared his allegiance to the new king who gave him his hand and 'took him up to him into the chariot,'[2] and with him made his triumphal entry into Samaria, and with him carried out the plot for the assassination of the priests and worshippers of Baal. From this it is evident that the Rechabite chiefs were regarded by the kings of Israel with considerable respect. Three hundred years passed away after the days of Jonadab and Jehu. Israel, apostate Israel, was no more. Treacherous Judah was no better than her backsliding sister Israel had been, and was already tottering on the brink of destruction, but the faithful Rechabites still religiously followed the commands of the revered Jonadab, *and* maintained their independence, rigidly ab-

[1] *Jer.* xxxv. 14. [2] 2 Kings, x. 15.

staining from wine, and preserving in the midst of or near a people given to excess and luxury (the Phœnicians) all the original simplicity of their nomadic life, and though surrounded by idolatry in every form, adhered strictly to the true religion. In such an unsettled country as that of Judea, they must have often been called upon to pass through hardships and dangers peculiar to their unprotected state, often compelled to hurriedly break up an encampment, and remove to some place of safety out of the route of an invading army. Till the reign of Jehoiakim, however, Palestine had always afforded them a resting-place in one part or another congenial to their tastes and habits, but now they were compelled to leave the open country and take refuge within the walls of Jerusalem. Then it was that Jeremiah, under God's directions, took the strangers up into one of the chambers of the temple and there tested their principles by offering them wine and bidding them drink it, but they refused, on the ground that they had ever obeyed the command of their father Jonadab in all things, and one of his commands to them was, 'Ye shall drink no wine, neither ye, nor your sons for ever.'[1] The Lord heard the reply of the conscientious Rechabites to Jeremiah, and bade the prophet go to the men of Judah and expostulate with them upon their disobedience and hardness of heart, contrasting their conduct with that of the faithful Recha-

[1] Jer. xxxv. 6.

bites, and declaring that He would bring upon the nation all the evil He had pronounced against her. He then blessed the Rechabites for their obedience to the commands of Jonadab, by the promise given through Jeremiah, 'Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not want a man to stand before me for ever.'[1] The conduct of the Rechabites in the incident just related was indeed a reproof to the Judeans. Jonadab had been dead three hundred years, and yet his commands, which were very arbitrary, were rigidly obeyed. There could be no sin in cultivating fields or living in houses, whatever moral worth there may have been in the injunction to drink no wine. Yet because Jonadab commanded it, he was obeyed. When Jeremiah set wine before the Rechabites, he had no thought of tempting them to break their pledge, but knowing that they would keep it, he meant thereby to reprove the Israelites. How pointed was the rebuke to the men of Judah! Jonadab was obeyed, but the Israelites who had reasonable not arbitrary laws from God, not from a frail mortal; from the living God who had loaded them with benefits and could still reward them, not from a dead ancestor who had done little for them and could do nothing more—had rebelled against their Maker and heeded not His words. The subsequent history of the Rechabites is involved in some obscurity, but we obtain glimpses of them from time to time even

[1] Jer. xxxv. 19.

down to our own day. Nehemiah[1] mentions a son of Rechab as co-operating with the priests, Levites, and princes in the restoration of the wall of Jerusalem. From this some infer that the Rechabites shared the captivity of the Hebrews in Babylon. For five hundred years, or rather more, we lose sight of this interesting family, and then Hegesippus brings them once more before us. After the martyr apostle, James the Just, had been flung from the battlements of the temple, the Scribes and Pharisees began to stone him, when 'one of the priests of the sons of Rechab, the son of Rechabim, who are mentioned by Jeremiah the prophet,' cried out protesting against the crime. In the twelfth century, the traveller Benjamin of Tudela, mentions that near El Iubar he found Jews who were named Rechabites; they abstained from wine and flesh, and gave tithes to teachers who devoted themselves to studying the law. The learned Dr. Wolff, the Jewish missionary, came in contact with a tribe near Mecca, who identified themselves with the sons of Jonadab. He (Dr. Wolff) had an interview with one of this tribe named Mousa, and found that they adhered strictly to the old rule. From the same authority we learn that in 1832 a traveller visited a tract to the south of Judea which had been unexplored for centuries, and met there a native who claimed to be a Rechabite, and who, when an Arabic Bible was shown to him turned to the

[1] Neh. iii. 14.

thirty-fifth chapter of Jeremiah, and said that it was still true of them, for they still kept the precepts of Jonadab their father. This account is confirmed by English residents at Mocha. If these statements are to be relied upon, and we see no reason why they should not be, literally has the promise been fulfilled that Jonadab the son of Rechab should not want a man to stand before God for ever. A little handful of people has kept upon the same spot for about a hundred generations, while all the neighbouring nations have undergone change and dissolution, and a rude Arab in the present day says to the traveller as did the Rechabites to Jeremiah, 'Jonadab, the son of Rechab, commanded us to drink no wine, nor to build houses, nor to sow seed, nor to plant vineyards, and we have obeyed and done according to all that Jonadab our father commanded us.'

Very pitiable was the position of Jerusalem at the time the Rechabites sought shelter within her walls. Crowded with refugees and divided within herself, her pecuniary resources weakened by war and taxation, how could she prepare herself for the trial coming upon her? Two factions contended against each other, the one favouring an alliance with Egypt, the other advocating conciliatory measures with Babylon. The latter party, of which Jeremiah was the chief representative, was far in the minority, and met with violent opposition from the king, the *priests, and the* princes. The more desperate their

case became, the more hardened and rebellious the majority of the Hebrews grew; and Jehoiakim in the fifth year of his reign committed an act of daring impiety, which is to this day remembered by the Jews with abhorrence and grief. In the fourth year of Jehoiakim, the prophecies of Jeremiah relating to Judah were most explicit. He foretold that *Nebuchadnezzar* should destroy her, and that the whole land should be desolate, and that her children should be in captivity *seventy years.*

Not only the doom of Judah was foretold, but that of all the nations who were in turn to yield to the mighty power of Babylon. It was a long list of condemned kings that the Lord gave to Jeremiah. Jerusalem's kings stood first upon the fatal roll, then followed Pharaoh-necho, and a long train of crowned heads. And then the 'king of Sheshac'[1] (Babylon) was himself to drink of the cup of God's fury. So far the prophecies of Jeremiah had been uttered here and there at intervals, but now they were by God's command to be collected and written in a roll, and read as a whole in the hearing of the people. 'It may be (said the still loving Father of the Hebrews), that the house of Judah will hear all the evil which I purpose to do unto them; that they may return every man from his evil way; that I may forgive their iniquity and their sin.'[2] Jeremiah did as the Lord commanded him: his scribe, or secretary, Baruch, writing at his dictation all the

[1] *Jer.* xxv. 26. [2] Ibid. xxxvi. 3.

words he had spoken during the twenty-three years he had prophesied. Jeremiah being, as he says, 'shut up,' a prisoner, as some suppose, or perhaps in concealment for fear of his enemies, Baruch, instead of the prophet, took the sacred roll up into the temple, and there read it in the hearing of all the people, on the great fast of the Expiation, when all Judah and Jerusalem were assembled together at that solemnity. The king and his nobles were not present. We do not hear of any deep impression being made upon the people, by the reading of the roll, but Baruch himself was so struck with the awfulness of the denunciations it contained that he fainted. The Lord comforted him, assuring him of His special protection. The great fast of the Expiation was kept by the Hebrews on the tenth of the month Tizri (answering to part of September and October). Almost immediately after its celebration that year, Nebuchadnezzar with his invincible army crossed the frontier, and was soon before Jerusalem, which he found almost defenceless.

After a short siege he took the city, and bound Jehoiakim in fetters to carry him to Babylon. But he seems to have changed his mind, and he released his prisoner. Possibly the great conqueror, who was not without generous feeling, remembered the fidelity of Jehoiakim's father, Josiah. Jehoiakim was restored to the throne of Judah, but only as a Babylonish vassal. A great number of prisoners were however sent to Babylon (this was the begin-

ning of the seventy years' captivity), among them Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah; the three last better known as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, the names given to them by Nebuchadnezzar. These four were royal princes of Judah, selected with others at the command of Nebuchadnezzar, who 'spake unto Ashpenaz, the master of his eunuchs, that he should bring certain of the children of Israel, and of the king's seed, and of the princes; children, in whom was no blemish, but well-favoured, and skilful in all wisdom, and cunning in knowledge, and understanding science, and such as had ability in them to stand in the king's palace, and whom they might teach the learning and the tongue of the Chaldeans.'[1] Thus was in part fulfilled the prophecy spoken by Isaiah to Hezekiah after the reception of the Babylonian ambassadors: 'Behold, the days come, that all that is in thine house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store unto this day, shall be carried into Babylon: nothing shall be left, saith the Lord. And of thy sons that shall issue from thee, which thou shalt beget, shall they take away; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.'[2] After the departure of the Chaldeans from Jerusalem, Jehoiakim, instead of being softened by misfortune, became more and more hardened, and his infatuated subjects were for the most part quite willing to be led by him.

[1] Dan. i. 3, 4. [2] 2 Kings, xx. 17, 18.

Both king and people received unmoved warning upon warning, sent to them direct from the Almighty, and they were determined to shut their eyes to their danger, even when the woes denounced against them for their sins began to fall upon their devoted heads.

Another sad year passed away, and the anniversary of the taking of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar was observed by a public fast. Again was Baruch sent by Jeremiah into the temple with the sacred roll of prophecies, to read it a second time in the hearing of the people.[1] The faithful Baruch entered 'the chamber of Gemariah the son of Shaphan the scribe in the higher court, at the entry of the new gate of the Lord's house,'[2] and from the window (standing probably in a balcony) executed his sad commission. Michaiah the son of Gemariah was present, and when Baruch had finished reading he went down into the palace, where in the chamber of Elishama the king's secretary, his father and other nobles were assembled in council. To them Michaiah declared all that Baruch had been reading to the people. The princes at once sent for Baruch, desiring him to bring with him the sacred roll. 'So Baruch the son of Neriah took the roll in his hand, and came unto them. And they said unto him, Sit down

[1] We have followed the opinion of Archbishop Usher and Dean Prideaux, that the roll was read publicly a second *time.*

[2] Jer. xxxvi. 10.

now, and read it in our ears. So Baruch read it in their ears. Now it came to pass, when they had heard all the words, they were afraid both one and other, and said unto Baruch, We will surely tell the king of all these words. And they asked Baruch, saying, Tell us now, How didst thou write all these words at his mouth? Then Baruch answered them, He pronounced all these words unto me with his mouth, and I wrote them with ink in the book. Then said the princes unto Baruch, Go, hide thee, thou and Jeremiah, and let no man know where ye be.'[1] Greatly alarmed, the princes, after securing the precious document, went to Jehoiakim and told him all they had heard. 'So the king sent Jehudi to fetch the roll; and he took it out of Elishama's the scribe's chamber. And Jehudi read it in the ears of the king, and in the ears of all the princes which stood beside the king. Now the king sat in the winter house in the ninth month: and there was a fire on the hearth burning before him. And it came to pass that when Jehudi had read three or four leaves, he cut it with the penknife, and cast it into the fire that was on the hearth.'[2] In silence, and without betraying any signs of horror, all the nobles, save three, beheld this daring act of impiety. Too well trained had they been in courtly etiquette, and too fearful were they of incurring the royal displeasure to interfere with the august personage in whose presence they stood,

[1] *Jer.* xxxvi. 14–19. [2] Ibid. 21–23.

forgetting that they were also in the presence of the insulted King of kings, whose wrath had only shortly before struck terror into their false hearts; and perchance it was a relief to them to see consumed the terrible roll which was to them as a death-warrant. The three princes who attempted to prevent the impious deed are honourably mentioned by name. The fire in which the precious roll was consumed was probably in a brazier standing in front of the king. The word hearth might have been translated brazier. Not content with burning the sacred roll, Jehoiakim sent messengers to seize upon Jeremiah and his faithful friend and attendant, Baruch, 'but the Lord hid them.'[1] The prophet was then commanded by God to write another roll, containing not only all that had been written before, but a special message to Jehoiakim for his daring impiety. The Jews keep an annual fast to this day for the burning of the roll by Jehoiakim. The day marked for it in their calendar is the 29th of the month Chisleu, corresponding to part of November and December.

For an entire year after he had taken Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar was employed in carrying on his war against the Egyptians, and so great was his success, that he brought all in subjection to him from the river Euphrates to the river of Egypt. The river of Egypt so often mentioned in Scripture, is not the Nile but a small river which forms the

[1] Jer. xxxvi. 26.

boundary of Palestine towards Egypt. Ere Nebuchadnezzar could reach home after his victorious campaign, he received intelligence of the death of his father Nabopollasar, so, leaving his army with all the prisoners and spoil to follow under charge of his generals, he, with a small body-guard, hastened by the desert to Babylon. On his arrival at the palace he was at once declared king of Babylonia, over which he reigned forty-three years.

When Jehoiakim had served Nebuchadnezzar three years, he rebelled against him, and attempted to renew his confederacy with Pharaoh-necho. The indignant king of Babylon, being at that time unable to leave his capital sent orders for the governors of the provinces near Palestine to punish his rebellious vassal, consequently Judah was invaded by bands of Syrians, Moabites, and Ammonites, all under the sovereignty of Babylon. These with bands of the Chaldeans harassed terribly the unhappy Hebrews. For three years Judah was invested by her enemies, and to add to the sufferings of her children she was visited with dearth. How vividly does Jeremiah describe the terrible plague of drought in a few lines of exquisite beauty and pathos :—

'Because of the drought Judah mourneth,
And the gates thereof languish ;
They are in deep mourning for the land ;
And the cry of Jerusalem is gone up.
The nobles also have sent their younger ones for water ;
They came to the pits ; they found no water ;
They returned with their vessels empty ;

They were ashamed and confounded,
They covered their heads.
When the hind also had calved in the fields,
Then it was deserted, because there was no grass.
And the wild asses stood on the plains,
They snuffed up the wind like dragons ;
Their eyes were wasted,
Because there was no herbage.'[1]

Whilst misery in every form was being heaped upon the Hebrews at home, the four captives, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, were, through the Divine blessing, raised to the highest official position in Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar had dreamed his first wonderful dream, Daniel had miraculously interpreted it, and, overwhelmed with awe and admiration, the impulsive monarch had fallen down on his face before his captive and worshipped him. 'Then the king made Daniel a great man, and gave him many great gifts, and made him ruler over the whole province of Babylon, and chief of the governors over all the wise men of Babylon. Then Daniel requested of the king, and he set Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, over the affairs of the province of Babylon.'[1] The wretched Jehoiakim, after a reign of eleven years, was slain, and his dead body was cast out on to the highway, beyond one of the gates of Jerusalem, there to be treated with the greatest contempt as Jeremiah had foretold. Jehoiakim's confederate, Pharaoh-necho, king of Egypt, had died the year before.

[1] *Jer. xiv.* 2–6. Blayney's translation. [2] Dan. ii. 48, 49.

Jehoiachin, also called Jeconiah and Coniah, succeeded his father Jehoiakim. He was only eighteen years of age, but was experienced in wickedness, doing that which was evil in the sight of the Lord. For three months he reigned in Jerusalem, a prisoner really, for the whole of the time the city was blockaded by her enemies. Then Nebuchadnezzar appeared in person before Jerusalem. After a very short siege, Jehoiachin, with his mother, his servants, his nobles, and his eunuchs, went out to the Babylonian king, and surrendered themselves at discretion. Jehoiachin, perhaps, hoped to receive from the hands of Nebuchadnezzar the same treatment his father had done when he first fell into the hands of the Chaldeans. But if any such hope animated his breast, he was doomed to be disappointed; for if not treated as a *royal* prisoner—that is to say, with the utmost cruelty, it being the common practice in those days, at least, among the Orientals, for kings to act worse than savages towards their fallen compeers—he was seized, fettered, and carried to Babylon, there to languish in a dungeon thirty-six years. As Nehushta, the queen-mother, is mentioned in conjunction with the king, both in the prophecy of Jeremiah and in the historical narrative, we infer that she exercised considerable influence for evil over the wretched Jehoiachin. In Oriental royal households it was the queen-mother, not a wife of the reigning sovereign, who

was regarded as mistress, and often, no doubt, exercised her power beyond her province, especially when the king, her son, was but young. Nebuchadnezzar sacked Jerusalem. Both the king's house and the temple were stripped of their treasures, the five thousand four hundred gold and silver vessels which Solomon had placed in the latter being among the spoil. A multitude of prisoners were selected by Nebuchadnezzar in addition to the king, the queen-mother, and the sad procession of courtiers and attendants who had gone forth from the city to give themselves up to the great Chaldean despot. With a view to the enlarging and embellishing of his capital and the strengthening of his army, Nebuchadnezzar chose all who were skilled in the arts both of war and peace to the number of seven thousand. Of craftsmen and smiths he took one thousand, and 'all that were strong and apt for war, even them the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon.'[1] In this captivity the prophet Ezekiel was carried to Babylon, and from this year he dates his revelations by the river Chebar. Few but those of the poorest class were now left in Palestine. Mattaniah, another son of the good Josiah, and consequently uncle to Jehoiachin, was placed upon the throne by Nebuchadnezzar. He was but three years older than his unfortunate nephew. He bound himself by a solemn oath to be true and faithful to the

[1] 2 Kings, xxiv. 16.

king of Babylon, who changed his name to Zedekiah, which means 'the justice of the Lord,' that he might be continually reminded of the punishment he must expect at the hands of the Lord his God, if he violated the oath he had taken in His name. Zedekiah was, indeed, but the shadow of a king. Weak and vacillating, an idolater, we are led to infer, yet in terror of the judgments of God, he was swayed to and fro by the contending factions in Jerusalem, and was as much in the power of his nobles as in that of Nebuchadnezzar. Respecting and fearing Jeremiah, and inclined to listen to his counsel, and yet too cowardly to follow it, he greatly increased the prophet's dangers and difficulties. As the crisis drew on, Jeremiah's office became more and more unpopular. With a perversity, which seems in their hopeless condition inexplicable, the faction in favour of an alliance with Egypt were determined, if possible, to throw off the Babylonian yoke. The more desperate they became, the more energetic was the dauntless and faithful Jeremiah in his endeavours to save as many as possible from the destruction which would inevitably fall upon those who rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. He succeeded in persuading some to leave Palestine, and take refuge in Babylonia. There they were kindly received, and were located among their brethren of the captivity, but the greater portion of the remnant left in Judah *turned a deaf* ear alike to warnings and threaten-

ings. The captive prophet Ezekiel had revealed to him in a vision the preservation of those who trusted in God's word, and the destruction of those who were determined to the last to be guided only by their own evil passions. In the vision six men (in representation of so many destroying angels) entered Jerusalem by the 'higher gate which lieth toward the north'[1] (Chaldea), each one having a weapon in his hand, and one carried an inkhorn. He that carried the inkhorn was commanded by the Lord to make a mark upon the forehead of every faithful one in the city. The other five messengers were ordered to slay all who had not a mark on their foreheads. God's commands were obeyed. Overwhelmed with awe and grief at what he beheld, the prophet fell on his face before the Lord, and interceded for his wretched countrymen, but God would not be entreated for them, and all who had not been marked in the forehead were doomed to perish. It was the custom in the East for persons of consequence to mark their servants in the forehead. In the book of Revelation we read of a hundred and forty-four thousand being 'sealed the servants of our God in their foreheads.'[2]

Nebuchadnezzar having with his army taken his departure from Palestine, the kings of Ammon, Moab, Edom, Zidon, Tyre, and of other nations, all under the Babylonian yoke, sent ambassadors *to the Judean* court to congratulate Zedekiah upon

[1] *Ezek.* ix. 2. [2] Rev. vii. 3.

his accession to the throne, and also to persuade him to league with them against Nebuchadnezzar. Jeremiah, under God's direction, took the matter in his own hands. He appeared in Jerusalem with cords and yokes round his neck. These he distributed among the foreign ambassadors, desiring them to take them to their respective masters, with this message from the Lord of Hosts the God of Israel, 'I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground, by My great power, and by My outstretched arm, and have given it unto whom it seemed meet unto Me. And now have I given all these lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, My servant, and the beasts of the field have I given him also to serve him. And all nations shall serve him, and his son, and his son's son, until the very time of his land come; and then many nations and great kings shall serve themselves of him. And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the Lord, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand. Therefore hearken not ye to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreamers, nor to your enchanters, nor to your sorcerers, which speak unto *you, saying,* Ye shall not serve the king of Baby-

lon: for they prophesy a lie unto you, to remove you far from your land; and that I should drive you out, and ye should perish. But the nations that bring their neck under the yoke of the king of Babylon, and serve him, those will I let remain still in their own land, saith the Lord; and they shall till it, and dwell therein.'[1] The prophet delivered a similar message to Zedekiah. It is stated in the first verse of this chapter that what has just been related occurred 'in the beginning of the reign of Jehoiakim.'[2] This is a mistake, the name Jehoiakim having been inserted in the text through the carelessness of the scribes instead of Zedekiah. Saint Jerome is of opinion that the yoke was a wooden collar which was fastened on the neck. Slaves were often forced to wear it with their arms bound to it. It would appear from the next event mentioned in the book of Jeremiah that the prophet went up into the temple with the symbolical yoke upon his neck. There were assembled the priests and people, to whom a false prophet named Hananiah declared that in a vision the Lord had revealed to him that He had broken the yoke of the king of Babylon, and that in two years' time all the gold and silver vessels Nebuchadnezzar had taken out of the temple, and had carried to Babylon, would be restored, and that Jehoiachin and all the Judean exiles should at the same time return to their own land. Only too thankful would Jere-

[1] *Jer.* xxvii. 5–11. [2] Ibid. 1.

miah have been if he could have looked upon Hananiah as a true prophet, and with reverence he said when the latter had done speaking, 'Amen: the Lord do so; the Lord perform thy words which thou hast prophesied.'[1] But Jeremiah doubted the truth of what Hananiah had declared, and said that the event would prove whether the Lord had sent him or not. Hananiah then took the wooden yoke from off Jeremiah's neck, and broke it, saying that the Lord had revealed to him that He would within two years thus break the yoke of Babylon from the neck of all the nations tributary to Babylon. 'The prophet Jeremiah went his way,'[2] leaving the false, and, we can readily believe, popular Hananiah in possession of the field. But short was the triumph of the latter; for the Lord quickly sent a message to him by Jeremiah, to the effect that, as he had broken the yokes of wood that had been put upon the necks of the nations who were to serve the king of Babylon, he (Hananiah) had made for them yokes of iron by deluding the people with false hopes, and rendering them more hardened and defiant, and consequently exasperating Nebuchadnezzar more against themselves. In order that Jeremiah might be proved a true prophet, he was commissioned to reveal to Hananiah that within a year he should die; 'so Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month.'[3] Not only in Judea were these serpents

[1] *Jer. xxviii. 6.* [2] Ibid. 11. [3] Ibid. 17.

the false prophets at large, insinuating their poison into the minds of their easily deluded countrymen, but in Babylonia, among the Hebrew captives, they were no less active in seeking popularity by their vile profession. Jeremiah, in letters, he had an opportunity of sending to the exiles, bade them settle in the land of their captivity—to marry, build houses, and plant gardens—for Babylonia was to be their home for seventy years. Full of affectionate interest, he cautioned them against listening to the false prophets that were among them. In these epistles Jeremiah, by God's command, pronounced judgment upon two false prophets, named Ahab and Zedekiah, abandoned wretches, who, whilst pretending to be servants of God, committed abominations that cannot be spoken of. 'Behold, I will (said the Lord) deliver them into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon; and he shall slay them before your eyes.'[1] They were burnt to death by the command of Nebuchadnezzar, who would, we may be sure, quickly silence such disturbers of the public peace as soon as his attention was drawn to them. The captive Hebrews were enjoined to pronounce the following curse upon a false prophet: 'The Lord make thee like Zedekiah and like Ahab, whom the king of Babylon roasted in the fire.'[2] The culprits were probably cast into a fiery furnace, *as were* Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, not

[1] *Jer.* xxix. 21. [2] Ibid. 22.

bound to stakes and consumed as those condemned to death by burning were in more modern times. Jeremiah's letters were conveyed to the Hebrew captives by two ambassadors king Zedekiah was sending to the Babylonian court. The prophet's exhortations and predictions gave great offence to those of the captivity who were unwilling to have dispelled the vain hopes which had been raised by the false prophets, one of whom, Shemaiah, the Nehelamite (dreamer), sent by the ambassadors on their return to Judah letters to the priests and to the people in Jerusalem. The packet was directed to Zephaniah, a priest, probably a ruler of the temple, whose office it was, among others, to punish pretenders to the gift of prophecy. In the letter to Zephaniah, Shemaiah found fault with him for not exercising his authority, by punishing Jeremiah as a false prophet with imprisonment and the stocks. 'Why hast thou not (so ran part of the missive) reproved Jeremiah of Anathoth, which maketh himself a prophet to you? For therefore he sent unto us in Babylon, saying, This captivity is long: build ye houses, and dwell in them; and plant gardens, and eat the fruit of them.'[1] The villany of Shemaiah was exposed; for Zephaniah read the base epistle to Jeremiah, who was commissioned by the Lord to send the following message from Him to all of the captivity, 'Behold I will punish Shemaiah the Nehelamite, and his seed: he shall not have a man

[1] Jer. xxix. 27, 28.

to dwell among this people; neither shall he behold the good that I will do for My people, saith the Lord; because he hath taught rebellion against the Lord.'[1] Whether or not immediate retribution fell upon the head of the base Shemaiah, we are not told, but it was an awful judgment, the curse of God to rest upon him and his children till all were exterminated.

There being no chronological order observed in the arrangement of the chapters in the book of Jeremiah, it is difficult to know, when no date is given, in what precise year certain events took place. There is reason, however, to suppose that it was shortly after Jehoiachin and a multitude of his subjects had been carried to Babylon, that Jeremiah sent the letters to his exiled countrymen by the hands of Elasah and Gemariah. In the fourth year of Zedekiah, Jeremiah was commanded, after his delivery of two grand, awfully grand, prophecies against Babylon, to write in a book all the evil that should come upon Babylon, and then send the book to the Hebrew captives by Seraiah, Zedekiah's chief chamberlain, who was going on an embassy from his royal master to Nebuchadnezzar. Seraiah was brother to Baruch, Jeremiah's secretary. The prophet did as he was commanded, and then gave the sacred book to Seraiah, with these words, 'When thou comest to Babylon, and shalt see, and shalt read all these words; then shalt thou say, O

[1] Jer. xxix. 32.

Lord, Thou hast spoken againt this place, to cut it off, that none shall remain in it, neither man nor beast, but that it shall be desolate for ever. And it shall be, when thou hast made an end of reading this book, that thou shalt bind a stone to it, and cast it into the midst of the Euphrates: and thou shalt say, Thus shall Babylon sink, and shall not rise from the evil that I will bring upon her: and they shall be weary'[1]—'sleep a perpetual sleep and not wake.'[2] That Seraiah must have been no less than his brother Baruch a man of exalted piety, unwavering faith, and dauntless courage, is evident, or he would have shrunk from undertaking a mission so full of danger. He was no mean person, below the notice of those whose fate he was directed to publish, but he was a state officer, an ambassador from one court to another, and accompanied no doubt with such a retinue of attendants as became an Oriental prince. His every action and word would be noted by curious eyes and ears in Babylon, and many traitors there would probably be among his own countrymen. But Seraiah was one of those in whose forehead the Lord had set His mark, and no harm could befall him. For the first few years of Zedekiah's reign, after the Chaldeans had departed from Palestine, no foreign foe disturbed the peace of the kingdom. The proposed league between Judah and the neighbouring nations against Nebuchad-

[1] *Jer. li.* 61–64. [2] Ibid. li. 39.

nezzar had through Jeremiah's influence been abandoned. The prophet enjoyed more freedom than he had done in the two previous reigns, but his anxieties and his sorrows were by no means alleviated. Zedekiah believed, feared, and looked up to him, yet was too irresolute and cowardly to follow his counsel in opposition to the will of his nobles. Who can tell the grief of the devoted Jeremiah, as he beheld this the last son of his beloved Josiah wilfully, not blindly, following the steps of his wicked brothers, and hastening on the ruin of his country? Oh! why would not the young king be guided by his faithful friend and (as is supposed) relative? If his hardened, idolatrous nobles rebelled, and he was too weak to stand against them, would not the Lord help him? and if human means were to be used to subdue the refractory ones, could not Nebuchadnezzar's power be easily brought into requisition? But, alas! though fearing the judgments of the Almighty, Zedekiah would not humble himself to the omnipotent King of kings. Contemptible in his weakness, there cannot be found in his character a trait of the noble qualities which distinguished his father Josiah; and, as the necessity for action forced itself upon him, he betrayed more and more his incapacity for governing a discontented, rebellious people. All who read his sad history must pity while they condemn him. Had Josiah been spared, Zedekiah, carefully trained and jealously guarded from idola-

trous influences, might have grown up all that his fond father could have desired, but God thought fit to remove the good king when the young prince Mattaniah was but ten years of age. Upon the accession of Jehoahaz, the pious, orderly court of Josiah became a scene of wickedness and idolatry; and Mattaniah, with his naturally inconstant nature, was doubtless easily led to cast to the winds all the pious instructions of his father, and adopt the corrupt fashions of the courts of his two brothers. With unaccountable inconsistency he, when in an extremity, petitioned Jeremiah to intercede with the Lord for him and his people, and at the same time permitted, if he did not actually encourage, idolatry in every form among his subjects, allowing the holy temple itself to be polluted with the Egyptian, the Phœnician, and the Persian heathenish rites. That idolatry was practised in Judah to a fearful extent in her last days, we gather from a remarkable vision Ezekiel beheld in Babylonia in the sixth year of Zedekiah. The captive prophet tells us that, as he sat in his house with the elders of Judah, he beheld a glorious Being of the appearance of fire and amber. The Divine Spirit carried him far, far away 'to Jerusalem to the door of the inner gate that looketh toward the north; where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provoketh to jealousy.'[1]

As though in contrast with the cold, lifeless

[1] Ezek. viii. 3.

images of wood and stone, the glory of the Lord was there, even as the prophet had seen it in the plain by the river Chebar. This glory had 'the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so was the appearance of the brightness round about.'[1] The Spirit then told the prophet to look towards the north, and there at the gate of the altar was the image of jealousy in the entry. But greater abominations was Ezekiel to see. 'He (says the prophet) brought me to the door of the court; and when I looked, behold a hole in the wall. Then said He unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall: and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door. And He said unto me, Go in, and behold the wicked abominations that they do here. So I went in and saw; and behold every form of creeping things, and abominable beasts, and all the idols of the house of Israel, pourtrayed upon the wall round about. And there stood before them seventy men of the ancients of the house of Israel, and in the midst of them stood Jaazaniah the son of Shaphan, with every man his censer in his hand; and a thick cloud of incense went up. Then said He unto me, Son of man, hast thou seen what the ancients of the house of Israel do in the dark, every man in the chambers of his imagery? for they say, The Lord seeth us not; the Lord hath forsaken the earth. He said also unto me, Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater

[1] Ezek. i. 28.

abominations that they do. Then He brought me to the door of the gate of the Lord's house which was toward the north; and, behold, there sat women weeping for Tammuz. Then said He unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Turn thee yet again, and thou shalt see greater abominations than these. And He brought me into the inner court of the Lord's house; and, behold, at the door of the temple of the Lord, between the porch and the altar, were about five and twenty men, with their backs toward the temple of the Lord, and their faces toward the east; and they worshipped the sun toward the east. Then He said unto me, Hast thou seen this, O son of man? Is it a light thing to the house of Judah that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke Me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose. Therefore will I also deal in fury: Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in Mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.'[1] In this marvellous vision Ezekiel was shown the various idolatries then being practised in Judah. The image of jealousy, the seat and the altar of which he beheld, is by Bishop Warburton supposed to have been idolatry itself personified and made into an idol, provoking the Lord to jealousy. The first heathenish rites revealed to the prophet were

[1] Ezek. viii. 7–18.

being solemnised in a secret, subterranean cell below the council-chamber of the Sanhedrim. In this chamber of imagery the seventy members of the council, in the midst of whom was Jaazaniah the brother of Ahikam, Jeremiah's friend and protector, were assembled. These apostate elders were engaged in the mystic rites of Egyptian worship in honour either of Osiris, the universal benefactor of mankind, or of the malignant power Typhon, the source of all evil. Osiris, in the Egyptian mythology, was god of the sun; Isis, his wife, was goddess of the moon. A bull, distinguished by certain marks, was the incarnation of Osiris, a white cow of Isis, and a crocodile of the demon Typhon; these deities had many agents personified by different animals, birds, and reptiles, which may be seen to this day portrayed on the walls of the ancient temples and sepulchres of Egypt, just as Ezekiel beheld them on the walls of the subterranean chamber in the temple. In the city of Memphis, Osiris was especially worshipped, and most gorgeous temples were consecrated to Apis, the sacred bull, in honour of whom festivals and ceremonies were being continually celebrated. But no divinity, not even Osiris, was so universally worshipped as was the goddess Isis. The most splendid temple in the valley of the Nile, that of Dendera, unrivalled for beauty of design and richness of sculpture and painting, was dedicated to her. There was another principal god worshipped over a large

portion of Egypt, this was Horus, the son of Osiris and Isis. He was adored as the god of light, his father as the source of heat. To Horus were dedicated obelisks, the symbols, as is supposed, of the rays of the sun. Osiris reigned in the spring and summer, when the earth brought forth abundantly, and all nature smiled, and the Nile ran deep and majestically to the sea. The evil spirit Typhon was the presiding genius of the earth for the rest of the year. During his reign nature lost all her beauty—the Nile dwindled into a small stream, and the winds of the south whirled the noxious sand of the Libyan desert, the personification of Nepthe, Typhon's consort, over the land, making the earth barren and desolate. Pestilential vapours arose from the surface of the ground, and the fields swarmed with serpents and scorpions, and all noxious animals. A relentless enmity, as may be supposed, prevailed between the two conflicting powers of good and evil; and in the legends of the Egyptian creed, the details of the conflicts and success of the opposite principles, occupy a large and important share. In the beginning of the autumn, when the sun retired, Typhon was believed to have secretly assailed and overcome Osiris, whose body the victor hewed into twenty-six pieces, which were scattered to the winds: the spirit of Osiris descended to the shades below. Typhon then reigned over the earth till the spring. Meanwhile, Isis, with affectionate care, gathered the frag-

ments of her husband's murdered body and arranged them together. Shortly after his wife had completed her loving task, Osiris returned from the subterranean realms, attacked, vanquished, and imprisoned Typhon. This was at the end of winter, and the benevolent Osiris soon restored the earth to beauty and fertility. This conflict between the powers of good and evil was a yearly event, and was celebrated as such in the autumn with mournful ceremonies for the death of Osiris and the grief of Isis, and in the spring with festive rejoicings for the reappearance of the benevolent god, and for the restored happiness of his consort the fair Isis. Regarded as the cause of all evil and misfortune, and as a power capricious as well as cruel, it was deemèd essential to propitiate the wrath of Typhon, and avert the savage revenge he would nourish during his imprisonment, and all the Typhonian rites and ceremonies tended to this object. The crocodile was worshipped as the incarnation of the malignant spirit, and the most sumptuous temples, the walls of which shone with gold, silver, and amber, and sparkled with gems, were erected to his honour. In these gorgeous temples were many animals of the crocodile species, and on them were lavished every care and attention. It is even said that mothers looked with horrible delight upon their children being devoured by sacred crocodiles. The agents of Osiris and Typhon were numerous, and were embodied in

dogs, cats, shrew-mice, birds, beetles (the last mentioned were considered especially sacred), serpents, &c. It is related that when Cambyses, the father of Cyrus, attacked Pelusium, a strong town at the entrance of Egypt, he placed before his army a great number of dogs, sheep, cats, and other animals, which the Egyptians held sacred. The besieged would not throw a javelin or shoot an arrow in the direction of the enemy for fear of wounding one of their gods. By this stratagem Cambyses succeeded in taking the city without any resistance having been offered. The unsuspicious and innocent gods of the Egyptians met with most ungenerous treatment at the hands of Cambyses to whom they had rendered such valuable service. He chastised their priests, insulted their worshippers, and even slew the then existing Apis with his own hand. Doubtless the loss of fifty thousand Persians who perished shortly afterwards in the burning sands of Ethiopia would be regarded by the Egyptians as a judgment upon Cambyses for his horrible profanity. Cambyses, when he had slain the Apis, cast the carcase out of the temple. The dog, which had hitherto been a sacred animal, unfortunately for itself, lost caste by making a meal of the sacred bull. The cat was very devoutly worshipped in Egypt. 'Never (says Cicero) did we hear of a cat having been killed by an Egyptian.' Puss was, like other sacred animals, embalmed after life had departed, and was honoured with a mag-

nificent funeral. At Bubastis mummy cats are found in great abundance. How ludicrous must have been the effect when a visitor to the shrine of an Egyptian divinity (a cat we will suppose) after passing through superbly decorated gateways, courts, and consecrated grounds, halls supported by costly marble pillars, and whose walls glittered with precious stones, and were hung with beautiful pictures, arrived at the Adytum, or most sacred place, blazing with gold, silver, and amber, and paved with variegated marbles, and was introduced to the deity, allowed to gaze for a brief period upon the cat who sat or reclined on a magnificent carpet behind a richly embroidered curtain of purple and gold. A shrine-bearer or some other minister of the temple with much solemnity and at the same time chanting a hymn, lifts the curtain slightly, that the visitor may behold the god who is in all probability cleaning herself, and, doubtless, profanely wishing she were in one of Pharaoh's granaries engaged in the undignified and sacrilegious employment of chasing a sacred mouse; particularly as notwithstanding the state she lived in, she would not be too well fed, for the Egyptians had not only a great dread of becoming fat themselves, but also of their gods becoming so. The human figures in the Egyptian ancient sculptures are certainly remarkably slim, quite a contrast to those in the Assyrian groups. So grotesque, *childish,* and degrading was the animal worship of

the Egyptians, a people famous for their skill, wisdom, and learning; ('Moses, we read, was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians;'[1] and of Solomon it was said, as a proof of his great wisdom, that he excelled 'all the wisdom of Egypt;')[2] that were it not for the existence of innumerable mummies of beasts, birds, and reptiles, which fill the mummy pits of Egypt, and whose memory has been further preserved by inscriptions on walls, pillars, and other monuments, we should treat the history of Egypt's brute idols as a fable.

The Pharaohs included in their person the office of priest and king, and as the cunning priests with their tricks and jugglery, infused into the minds of the people that they (the priests) possessed supernatural powers, it is not to be wondered at that after his decease the subjects of an Egyptian king raised to Divine honours him who had ruled them on earth, and who there was reason to dread might be supreme in another world, where his revenge would be wreaked on those who neglected to pay him posthumous honours. That these honours were not withheld the famous Valley of the Kings at Thebes, with its splendid rock-hewn chambers, sculptures, paintings, and sarcophagi, testifies.

We should imagine that as the ceremonies Ezekiel beheld were being performed in a dark subterranean chamber, the wretched Jaazaniah

[1] *Acts*, vii. 22. [2] 1 Kings, iv. 30.

and his companions designed by them to propitiate the wrath of Typhon, to whom as the genius of evil the calamities that had befallen Judah would be attributed. Miserable deceivers were these ancients of the house of Israel; they must all of them have taken part in the services of the temple during the reign of the pious Josiah, and had made their covenant with the rest of the nation to serve the Lord their God and Him only. For fourteen years, they outwardly at least 'departed not from following the Lord, the God of their fathers,'[1] but how soon the mask was thrown off after Josiah's death! His successor, Jehoahaz, did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, and he reigned but three months; perhaps even in that short time 'the image of jealousy' had again become triumphant, and treacherous Judah had shown herself only too willing to bow before her throne.

Before noticing the next idolatrous rite Ezekiel beheld, 'women weeping for Tammuz,' we cannot refrain from bestowing a few lines descriptive of the scene so repeatedly sculptured and painted on the ruins of Thebes, and on the walls of the neighbouring royal tombs, and even on the mummy-cases and coffins. We mean the judgment of Osiris. No representation illustrative of Egyptian mythology can be compared in interest to these remarkable pictures. In them we recognise a perverted image of truth, doubtless derived traditionally from

[1] 2 Chron. xxxiv. 33.

tthe preaching of Noah, and the Divine knowledge the patriarch sought to impart to his descendants. Amid all that may seem grotesque and unintelligible we still detect the doctrine of future rewards and punishments. The Egyptians believed in the transmigration of souls, and the various changes through which a soul was believed to pass may be gathered from the pictures alluded to. As soon as death, who, strangely enough, seems not to have been deified by the Egyptians, had severed the mortal coil, the soul of the deceased was conducted by Horus to Amenti, the world of spirits, and was, in the form of a *mummy* ushered into the presence of Osiris, the judge of the future world, who is seen seated on a throne, and by his side his consort Isis. Around Osiris and Isis are arrayed the monstrous officiating deities, ram-headed, cat-headed, bird-headed, and crocodile-headed gods. In the middle stands Typhon, the Satan of the Egyptian's creed, gaping with his horrid jaws, and seemingly waiting for the souls of the condemned. Behind the great judge stands the ibis-headed Thoth, the recording angel; he holds in his hand a tablet, which appears to contain a record of the deeds 'done in the body,' and in which is to be written the impartial judgment of Osiris. Near Thoth stands Anubis the jackal-headed deity, who presides over the balance and scales, in which the actions of the deceased are being weighed. On one of the awful balances is a vase supposed to

contain the good actions of the soul being tried, while on the other balance is seen the emblem of truth, usually a representation of Thmei the goddess of truth. We are here forcibly reminded of the interpretation by Daniel of the mysterious writing on the wall of the Babylonian palace, 'Thou art weighed in the balances and art found wanting.'[1] If the soul of the deceased is not found wanting it is then introduced by Horus to Osiris, by whom it is dismissed with favour. It is then with other righteous souls carried by Horus to heaven, and they with Horus navigate the celestial Nile in the bark of the sun, and are landed in the habitations of the blessed. Here the happy souls reap the corn and gather the fruits of Paradise, and bathe in the pure river of the water of life, that flows past their habitation. Over them is inscribed, 'They have found favour in the eyes of the great God, they inhabit the mansions of glory, where they enjoy the life of heaven and rejoice in the presence of the supreme God.' But if, after having been weighed in the balance the soul is found wanting, it is punished by transmigration, according to the nature of the crimes it has committed. If the sins of the deceased have been great he is transformed into a bird, a beast, or a reptile, and is seen in his degraded state, being borne back to earth, generally ferried across the river of death to the world of life by a crew of

[1] Dan. v. 27.

baboons. If his crimes have been slight, he is again clothed in the human form, and is thus sent back to the world, so that an Egyptian — a firm believer in his creed—could never tell if among the mummies he carefully preserved as the relics of his forefathers, there was not one, perhaps two, which he had himself formerly occupied; for to all, whatever their fate, was given a cup of the waters of Lethe, a draught which swept from the memory all traces alike of the joys or sorrows of the past. Those souls that had been degraded to the nature of beasts, birds, or reptiles, after passing through many changes were at length permitted to resume the human form and reappear at the judgment-seat to be again tried by the dread Osiris. So long as the body remained undissolved it was considered by the Egyptians as still having connexion with the soul that had occupied it, but on its dissolution the soul was believed to pass into the body of some other animal; extraordinary pains were therefore taken to preserve the body, that in case of resurrection the soul might return to it again. This is the theoretical origin of the process of embalming, for which the Egyptians were so famous.

According to the Egyptian creed, the world was to endure three thousand years. The three thousand years were termed the great year, at the expiration of which period the earth, some believe the entire universe, was to be destroyed, a great blessing, we should suppose to those early descendants

of Noah, who had for their sins, been passing through a succession of transmigrations ever since the termination of their first brief existence as *original* human beings. There seems to have been great division among the priesthood as to what became of the soul at the end of the great year. Three doctrines on this subject were held. The first implied the belief in an eternal succession of wholly similar worlds to which the same spirits returned to perform the same actions. This was a system of rigid fatalism. The second was a pure and ennobling doctrine, teaching that rewards and punishments would be allotted according to the deeds committed, while sojourning on earth. The third system looked forward to the final happiness of every human being. This last was certainly a consolatory doctrine, especially to the incorrigible sinner, who through faith in it could look forward to the end of the great year as an eternal release from punishment, without the necessity of penitence and reformation. But Egyptian mythology has been for ages dead, has vanished for ever. As a study it is invaluable as the key to a state of things as utterly passed away as the world before the flood. It reveals to us how men thought and acted, and by what hopes and fears they were influenced in those ancient times when the fathers of the Hebrew race were dwelling in *tents* amid their flocks, or struggling in strange *conflict* with the accursed children of Canaan.

The second idolatrous rite Ezekiel beheld was being performed by Hebrew women, who were 'weeping for Tammuz.'[1] This was a Phœnician superstition derived from the Egyptian. There is considerable doubt who Tammuz was, but it is the opinion of many that he was Horus the son of Ashtoreth, by which name Isis was worshipped in Phœnicia. Some have however identified Ashtoreth and Astarte with the planet Venus; but it is very probable that in the case of Ashtoreth, as well as that of Baal, the latter the Phœnician god of the sun, being identified with Osiris, the symbol of the god varied at different times and in different localities. Horus was in different lands worshipped by the names of Adonis, Apollo, and Tammuz. That the children of Israel had become infected by idolatry during their long sojourn in Egypt, we have proof in the sad scene which took place in the wilderness of Sinai, only a few weeks after the miraculous escape from Pharaoh and his host. Impatient at the delay of Moses on the mount, the people peremptorily ordered Aaron to make them gods: 'Up (they cried), make us gods, which shall go before us; for as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we wot not what has become of him.'[2] Aaron yielded to the impious demand, the image of a bull-calf, the Egyptian Apis, was made, and Aaron's weakness was rewarded by seeing a feast of the Lord degraded to the lowest

[1] *Ezek.* viii. 14. [2] Exod. xxxii. 1.

form of heathen sensuality. The burning indignation of Moses when he beheld the molten calf with the Israelites dancing around it, the vengeance of the Lord in the terrible slaughter of the idolaters, and the agonized appeal of Moses the great commander, prophet, and lawgiver, were but scenes repeated with little variation over and over again till the Lord was 'weary with repenting,'[1] and with His 'rod' Assyria and His 'hammer' Babylon He drove His rebellious and apostate children from the land, which for nearly nine hundred years they had by Divine right held as their own. The slight hint given by Ezekiel of the worshippers, and the nature of the worship of Tammuz, has been considered sufficient to connect them with the yearly mourning for Adonis by the Syrian maidens. There are different versions of the legend of Adonis: the earliest and the simplest is this: the goddess Aphrodite, who is identified with the Ashtoreth of the Bible, the Astarte of the Greeks, the Isis of the Egyptians, and the Venus of the Romans, being charmed with the beauty of the infant Adonis, concealed him in a chest and consigned him to the care of Persephone, who afterwards refused to give up her lovely charge. Aphrodite appealed to Jupiter, who decided the dispute by decreeing that Adonis should spend one-third of the year with Aphrodite, one-third *with* Persephone, and the remaining third should

[1] Jer. xv. 6.

be at his own disposal. It was the pleasure of Adonis to give his four months to the charming goddess Aphrodite, thus spending eight months of each year with her, and four in the gloomy abode of his other patroness. As he grew up he was greatly beloved by Aphrodite, who was in constant dread of his meeting with some fatal accident whilst hunting wild beasts, a sport of which he was passionately fond. Her fears were not groundless, for one day he was mortally wounded by a wild boar from the forests of Lebanon. As soon as Aphrodite heard of the sad event she hastened to the scene of death. Adonis was obliged to descend into the lower world, but at the earnest solicitation of Aphrodite he was permitted to spend six months of every year with her in the upper world. The great feast of Adonis commemorated the death of Adonis and his return to Aphrodite. It consisted of two parts. In the days of grief the votaries mourned the disappearance of Adonis, in the days of gladness they celebrated his return. The first part was composed of all kinds of funereal ceremonies. The men cut their breasts with knives, and the women abandoned themselves to frantic grief, cutting their hair off and offering such sacrifices to the false gods as rendered the mourning for Tammuz a greater abomination in the eyes of the Lord than was the debasing worship carried on in the chambers of imagery. The *figure of Adonis*, with the wound in the side made

by the wild boar exposed, was laid on a superb bed or bier, and the ceremonies, which lasted several days, were performed with great pomp and grandeur. This annual mourning for Adonis or Tammuz the women of Israel celebrated after the example, and, doubtless, at the same time as the Phœnician females who then kept themselves seated before their houses with their faces to the *north*, weeping bitterly. There is a river which flows from the Lebanon once called the Adonis, acquiring its name from the fact, that about the time of the feast of Adonis, its waters were ruddy, giving the sea into which they ran a red tinge for a considerable distance. The heathen worshippers persuaded themselves that the discoloration of the water arose from the sympathy of nature with the death of Adonis, tinging the river with the blood of the slain deity. The peculiar colour of the water at certain seasons is still observed, and is caused, doubtless, by the red earths washed into the river by heavy rains, or by the stream being then so raised in its bed, as to wash some ocherous cliffs. The feast of Adonis, with its doleful lamentations for the departed god, and its extravagant rejoicings when the object of affection returned, bore in its nature such a strong resemblance to the Egyptian orgies connected with the lost and recovered Osiris, that many mythologists have concluded *that it was* derived from the latter source.

The third idolatrous worship that Ezekiel be-

held was that of Persia, namely, the adoration of the sun. This was certainly not a greater abomination than the Phœnician worship of Adonis and Aphrodite; for nothing could be more impure and disgusting than were some of the rites of the latter idolatry, but the 'greater abominations' lay in the persons and place connected with the last scene shown by the Spirit to the prophet. Dr. Lightfoot supposes that the actors in it were leaders of the twenty-four classes of priests, with the high-priest at their head. Isaiah speaks of these priests as 'the princes of the sanctuary.'[1] Ezekiel saw these 'chief priests,' as they are more commonly called, in the inner court of the temple, between the porch and the altar, where only the most solemn services were conducted, and where the priests never advanced but on some rare and extraordinary occasions, when earnest cries were to be put forth for sparing mercy. 'Blow the trumpet in Zion (was the prophetical exhortation of Joel), sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare Thy people, O Lord, and give not Thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them.'[2] In vain, all in vain, were

[1] *Isa.* xliii. 28. [2] Joel, ii. 15-17.

the cries, the appeals, the threats, and the denunciations of the prophets. In Judah's extremity her elders did assemble themselves together, but not to fast, and to weep, and to pray for mercy, but to add fuel to God's wrath, by polluting His holy house with the Egyptian beast-worship. And the princes of the sanctuary, where were they when Judah was tottering on the edge of the grave? They were in the right place in the inner court, between the porch and the altar, but their backs were towards the temple, and their faces towards the entrance at the east, and instead of crying to Jehovah they worshipped the sun. In the full light of early morning these impious chief priests defied the God of Israel. The elders in their dark chamber tried to persuade themselves that the Lord saw them not. The lovers of Adonis followed their own licentious wills, and rushed madly into all the extravagances of the sensational rites of the Phœnician idol-worship; but these 'holy princes' openly set God at defiance, and in His sacred courts turned their backs upon Him, that they might with due reverence perform their orisons to the sun, who in all the glory the despised and insulted Creator of the universe had given him was rising in the east.

'Twas morning prime,
And like a queen new seated on her throne,
God's crowned mountain, as in happier time,
Seem'd to rejoice in sunshine all her own;
So bright, while all in shade around her lay,
Her northern pinnacles had caught th' emerging ray.

The dazzling lines of her majestic roof
 Cross'd with as free a span the vault of heaven,
As when twelve tribes knelt silently aloof,
 Ere God His answer to their king had given,
Ere yet upon the new-built altar fell
The glory of the Lord, the Lord of Israel.

All seems the same: but enter in and see
 What idol shapes are on the wall portray'd:
And watch their shameless and unholy glee,
 Who worship there in Aaron's robes arrayed:
Hear Judah's maids the dirge to Tammuz pour,
And mark her chiefs yon orient sun adore!'[1]

No sooner had the Divine Spirit shown the prophet the third abomination than His indignation broke forth in invectives against the people of Judah. 'Is it a light thing to the house of Judah (He cried) that they commit the abominations which they commit here? for they have filled the land with violence, and have returned to provoke Me to anger: and, lo, they put the branch to their nose. Therefore will I also deal in fury: Mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: and though they cry in Mine ears with a loud voice, yet will I not hear them.'[2] There are various opinions as to the meaning of the expression, 'putting the branch to the nose.' Some commentators think it was a mode of saluting the sun, others (and their view to us seems the more probable one) that it was a gesture expressive of contempt—contempt of course for the Lord Almighty. Strangely infatuated

[1] *The Christian Year.* [2] Ezek. viii. 17, 18.

the cries, the appeals, the threats, and the denunciations of the prophets. In Judah's extremity her elders did assemble themselves together, but not to fast, and to weep, and to pray for mercy, but to add fuel to God's wrath, by polluting His holy house with the Egyptian beast-worship. And the princes of the sanctuary, where were they when Judah was tottering on the edge of the grave? They were in the right place in the inner court, between the porch and the altar, but their backs were towards the temple, and their faces towards the entrance at the east, and instead of crying to Jehovah they worshipped the sun. In the full light of early morning these impious chief priests defied the God of Israel. The elders in their dark chamber tried to persuade themselves that the Lord saw them not. The lovers of Adonis followed their own licentious wills, and rushed madly into all the extravagances of the sensational rites of the Phœnician idol-worship; but these 'holy princes' openly set God at defiance, and in His sacred courts turned their backs upon Him, that they might with due reverence perform their orisons to the sun, who in all the glory the despised and insulted Creator of the universe had given him was rising in the east.

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'Twas morning prime,
And like a queen new seated on her throne,
God's crowned mountain, as in happier time,
Seem'd to rejoice in sunshine all her own;
So bright, while all in shade around her lay,
Her northern pinnacles had caught th' emerging ray.

The dazzling lines of her majestic roof
 Cross'd with as free a span the vault of heaven,
As when twelve tribes knelt silently aloof,
 Ere God His answer to their king had given,
Ere yet upon the new-built altar fell
The glory of the Lord, the Lord of Israel.

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were the Hebrews with heathenism in whatever form it was introduced to them. The Egyptian, the Phœnician, and the Persian idol-worship, we have seen, were in full force among them. Baal, which, like the Egyptian Apis, brought such trouble upon the Israelites in the wilderness, was no less popular; his altars were again raised on the hills of Judah, and even on the house-tops, and at his shrine human victims were not thought too precious an offering. And there was the terrible fire-god Moloch, in whose burning brazen arms writhed the innocent victim, the first-born of the Hebrew mother, the tender babe consecrated by his guilty father to devils rather than to the God of Israel. Whilst no sacrifice was deemed too great for the insatiable gods of the heathen, the one offering the true God demanded—obedience—was refused. Oh, the agony of mind the devoted patriot and martyr Jeremiah must have endured! How must he have longed for the regal power of Josiah, that he might grind the false gods and their altars to powder, and give their dust to the winds and the waters, that he might inflict upon the apostate priests the punishment they so well merited, or, above all, that he could prevail upon his unhappy countrymen to repent, and with one heart and with one voice entreat the Lord to yet spare Judah. But the great prophet was powerless to stem the *tide of* destruction, the waves of which had already, *but* not in all their fury, broken over the nation.

They had receded, but the seer knew only for a time. Ere long their roar would again be heard as they approached from the north—on, on, they would come—no human barrier could check them, and the Lord's hand would not be held out to stay them till Jerusalem was swept from her throne, her glories laid in the dust, and Judah was no more.

CHAPTER IV.

FOR seven years Zedekiah was faithful to his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar, and then he was tempted, fatally to himself and his kingdom, to break it. He entered into a confederacy with Pharaoh-Hophra, king of Egypt, against the king of Babylon. Naturally indignant, Nebuchadnezzar the following year left his capital with a great host, intending to march direct to Jerusalem, and punish the perfidious Zedekiah. His progress, however, received a slight check by the news which reached him in Syria, that his tributary Ammon had also leagued herself with Egypt against him. He was doubtful which of his rebellious vassals he should first wreak his vengeance upon—the king of Judah or the king of Ammon. The gods must decide, so He 'stood at the parting of the way, at the head of the two ways, to use divination: he made his arrows bright, he consulted with images, he looked in the liver.'[1] *Divination* by arrows is of very remote antiquity,

[1] Ezek. xxi. 21.

and is still practised in some parts of the world, as is also divination by the entrails of animals. There were various forms among the ancients of consulting the gods by means of rods and arrows. The form among the Chaldeans was to mark upon the arrows the names of the places they had in view, or the alternatives they submitted to this determination. The arrows were then put into a quiver, from which they were drawn at random, and the one that came out first with one of the marks upon it was regarded, not only as supplying the response required, but as manifesting the will of the gods, and as conveying an assurance of success in the enterprise in view. In the case under our notice we are to suppose that the name Jerusalem, or a sign representing that city, was marked upon one arrow, that of Rabbah, the royal city of Ammon, upon another, and as the arrow for Jerusalem came out first, (the response from the teraphim, which were small images, household gods, and the condition of the liver being, we may conclude, favourable,) Nebuchadnezzar and his army took the road to the right, and marched towards Judah without any hesitation. The dreaded invaders did not, however, at once attack Jerusalem; they first laid waste all the smaller cities of Judah, thereby adding much to the sufferings the holy city endured during the siege, as she was in consequence overcrowded with refugees. At length she was herself *invested.* Greatly terrified, the miserable Hebrews

made a show of returning to the Lord God, but no hope was held out to them by the inspired Jeremiah. On the contrary, he was commanded by the Lord to deliver to Zedekiah the following judgment upon him and his nation: 'Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall burn it with fire; and thou shalt not escape out of his hand, but shalt surely be taken, and delivered into his hand; and thine eyes shall behold the eyes of the king of Babylon, and he shall speak with thee mouth to mouth, and thou shalt go to Babylon. Yet hear the word of the Lord, O Zedekiah, king of Judah; Thus saith the Lord of thee, Thou shalt not die by the sword: but thou shalt die in peace: and with the burnings of thy fathers, the former kings which were before thee, so shall they burn odours for thee; and they will lament thee, saying, Ah lord! for I have pronounced the word, saith the Lord. Then Jeremiah the prophet spake all these words unto Zedekiah king of Judah in Jerusalem.'[1] One of the funereal ceremonies of the Jews, when the deceased was a person of rank, was to make a great heap of all sorts of aromatics, which was burnt as a triumphal farewell to the departed one. In this costly bonfire were thrown the clothes and the armour of the deceased. Thus it is said of King Asa that 'they made a very great burning *for him.*'[2] And besides this burning of aromatics,

[1] Jer. xxxiv. 2–6. [2] 2 Chron. xvi. 14.

Asa was laid 'in the bed which was filled with sweet odours, and divers kinds of spices prepared with the apothecaries' art.'[1] As there was a 'very great burning' made for Asa, it is supposed that the bed or bier on which he lay in state, and the vessels and furniture used by him, were also burnt. Probably a portion of the hundred pounds weight of 'myrrh and aloes'[2] Joseph of Arimathea took to the Holy Sepulchre was intended to be burnt, but we are only told that the mourners took 'the body of Jesus, and wound it in linen clothes with the spices, as the manner of the Jews is to bury.'[3] The only two cases of embalming recorded among the Hebrews were those of Jacob and Joseph, whose bodies were embalmed in Egypt. These two sacred mummies still rest, we have no reason to doubt, where they were first entombed. The one in Hebron's ancient cave, Machpelah; the other in the parcel of ground which Jacob bought of the sons of Hamor the Hivite prince, and on which stands now the town of Nablus.

Another national custom of the Hebrews was to make public lamentations for the dead. We first hear of this funereal ceremony when the gigantic procession which accompanied the embalmed body of Jacob from Egypt to Hebron stopped near Jericho, and for seven days 'mourned with a great and very sore lamentation.'[4] So grievous were

[1] 2 Chron. xvi. 14.
[2] John, xx. 39.
[3] *John*, xx. 40.
[4] Gen. l. 10.

the lamentations, that the Canaanites named the spot Abel-Mizraim, which means the mourning of the Egyptians. It became customary for the Hebrews to hire mourning women, who chanted the lamentations, accompanied at times by musical instruments. 'Call for the mourning women, that they may come; and send for cunning women, that they may come: and let them make haste, and take up a wailing for us, that our eyes may run down with tears, and our eyelids gush out with waters.'[1] The profession of these hired mourners was to exhibit in public all the signs and gestures of immoderate and frantic grief, and by their loud outcries and doleful songs to excite and stir up a real passion of sorrow in others. As much skill was required to produce the desired effect, the performers were called cunning—that is, skilful women. The same funereal ceremonies were observed in our Saviour's time. When the daughter of Jairus, one of the rulers of the synagogue, died, Jesus went to the house, and saw a tumult, 'and them that wept and wailed greatly.'[2] St. Matthew tells us that He 'saw the minstrels and the people making a noise.'[3] St. Jerome says that the same practice was common in Judea in his days. When according to the programme (for doubtless all the changes in the ceremony were pre-arranged) violent action was suspended, and the mourning was plaintive and subdued, very,

[1] *Jer.* ix. 17, 18. [2] Mark, v. 38. [3] Matt. ix. 23.

very touching and beautiful must have been these funereal dirges, for the Hebrews were eminently poetical and musical. What could be more exquisite, we may suppose, than were the Lamentations Jeremiah wrote for the funereal obsequies of the good Josiah? And how plaintive would be the solemn dirges sung by the captives in Babylon when they assembled to pay their last tribute of respect to the remains of the unfortunate Zedekiah. No hired mourners would be needed to excite the passion of grief, and make the eyes run down with tears, when the worn and mutilated body of Judah's last king was lifted from its dungeon bed and laid on the costly bed of spices, its prison garments changed for royal apparel, and its fetters for chains of gold. Was it, O Zedekiah, for the little kindness thou didst bestow upon God's faithful servant Jeremiah, when thy nobles were determined upon his death, that this one drop of comfort was thrown into the cup of anguish prepared for thee?—the Divine assurance that when death released thy troubled spirit, thy poor body would be treated with respect, and prepared for its last resting-place with all the generous and tender care thy own people could lavish upon it. There were those in Babylon of thine own kindred who would not count the cost of thy burial—princes of the house of David and rulers of the mighty empire in which they were captives, servants of the Most High, ready to do *His will in* all things, whether it were to burn

odours for thee 'with the burnings of thy fathers,' or to bear testimony before kings, in the fiery furnace and in the den of lions, that the Lord He is God, and He only. Were these great champions of their faith, Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, thy chief mourners, King Zedekiah? But we are not yet upon the last scene of the great tragedy. Zedekiah is still on his throne. The city of marble and cedar still glitters in the bright sunshine; her glorious temple still crowns the holy hill; her massive walls are still unbroken; and her great towers are still garrisoned with brave and disciplined troops. No less strong and beautiful to the outward eye is the 'Princess among Nations' than when her last noble king, the good Josiah, passed through her gates on his fatal march to Megiddo. But how changed is all within! Her holy and beautiful temple is defiled by heathenism, and stripped of its chief treasures; her people are filled with terror and discontent; her nobles are rebellious and defiant; and her king, contemptible in his weakness, conscious of the dangerous policy of his nobles, yet incompetent to steadily oppose it; no less sensible of the wisdom of Jeremiah's counsel, yet too timid to be guided by it.

The judgment of God against Zedekiah was delivered by Jeremiah to the king when the Chaldeans were besieging not only Jerusalem, but *Lachish* and Azekah also; the other cities of Judah

had each succumbed in her turn to the irresistible foe. Whatever kind consideration Zedekiah afterwards displayed to God's faithful messenger, he was at first very indignant, and shut 'him up in the court of the prison, which was in the king of Judah's house,'[1] saying, 'Wherefore dost thou prophesy, and say, Thus saith the Lord, Behold, I will give this city into the hand of the king of Babylon, and he shall take it; and Zedekiah king of Judah shall not escape out of the hand of the Chaldeans, but shall surely be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon, and shall speak to him mouth to mouth, and his eyes shall behold his eyes; and he shall lead Zedekiah to Babylon, and there shall he be until I visit him, saith the Lord: though ye fight with the Chaldeans, ye shall not prosper.'[2] Perhaps one reason why Jeremiah was treated thus harshly was because Ezekiel had also foretold the fate of Zedekiah, and it was difficult to reconcile the prophecy of the latter with that of Jeremiah. The prediction of Ezekiel was this, 'And the prince that is among them shall bear upon his shoulder in the twilight, and shall go forth: they shall dig through the wall to carry out thereby: he shall cover his face, that he see not the ground with his eyes. My net also will I spread upon him, and he shall be taken in My snare: and I will bring him to Babylon to the

[1] Jer. xxxii. 2. [2] Ibid. 3-5.

land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there.'

Ezekiel was one of a band of captives who were colonised on the banks of the Chebar (supposed to have been one of Nebuchadnezzar's great canals). There the revered prophet lived, the guardian, as it were, of this community of exiles; there his wife died, and there he beheld the visions he not only made known to them of the captivity, but to the remnant still in Judah, who compared them with the predictions of Jeremiah. Josephus says that Zedekiah, owing to the apparent discrepancy in the two prophecies relating to his own fate, was persuaded (probably by his courtiers) to regard Jeremiah and Ezekiel as false prophets, and that he consequently need not be dismayed at what they had pretended to foretell. All was shortly afterwards made too clear to the unfortunate monarch. He did, ere long, meet the mighty Nebuchadnezzar face to face, his terrified gaze encountered the stern eye of his enraged conqueror, he spoke to him mouth to mouth, maybe pleading in vain for the lives of his sons, and he was taken to Babylon; but, alas! the eyes which should have looked upon the great city had been torn from their sockets, and the gorgeous palaces of Babylon were no more to him than the dark dungeon.

An interesting scene took place in the court of

[1] Ezek. xii. 12, 13.

the prison of the king's house during Jeremiah's first confinement there. The prophet received instructions from God to purchase a field in Anathoth from a cousin who wished to dispose of it. Doubtless the owner of this piece of family property thought that silver and gold were of much more value then than land. Jeremiah, although knowing that the field was even already in the enemy's possession, and that no Hebrew could lay claim to it for half a century or more, unhesitatingly bought the small estate. All the legal forms were observed before witnesses in the purchase, as though peace reigned throughout the land, and are minutely described by the writer. Then in the presence of those who had 'subscribed the book of the purchase,'[1] and other witnesses, Jeremiah gave the title-deeds into the care of Baruch, his still faithful friend, attendant, and amanuensis, with these words, 'Thus saith the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, Take these evidences, this evidence of the purchase, both which is sealed, and this evidence which is open, and put them in an earthen vessel, that they may continue many days. For thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel; Houses, and fields, and vineyards, shall be possessed again in this land.'[2] The whole of this transaction was designed for the encouragement of the faithful. The management of the conveyancing of property among the Orientals in the present day is much

[1] *Jer.* xxxii. 12. [2] Ibid. 14, 15.

the same as it was in the time of Jeremiah. After a contract is made the deed is kept by the party himself, not by the notary, and a copy of it is made, signed by the notary alone, which copy is shown upon proper occasions, whereas the original deed is never exhibited. In the case before us, Baruch took possession of both documents, the one Jeremiah had signed and sealed, and the other that was signed only by himself. It is more than probable that the earthen vessel in which the deed was placed, after being hermetically sealed, was, before Jeremiah and Baruch were driven into exile, buried, hidden perchance in the field the former had purchased. Was it sought for and found when 'the men of Anathoth'[1] returned from Babylon, or is it there still where Baruch hid it? It was but a small piece of land that was sold, valued at the time at about two pounds, doubtless worth much more in times of peace. There were no descendants of Jeremiah to claim it, and of his kindred the Lord had sworn that for their treachery and their cruelty to their inspired relative, He would cause them to fall by the sword and the famine, and that not a remnant of them should be left. The city of the priests has long since disappeared, but 'her suburbs'[2] still remain, and are cultivated as when portioned out for the priests. Did ever pilgrim, looking down upon these suburbs speculate as to *where* lay the plot the Lord directed Jeremiah to

[1] Ezra, ii. 23. [2] Josh. xxi. 16.

purchase, or whether beneath the waving corn at his feet the earthen vessel with its precious document was buried and still lies there? When all the formalities connected with the purchase were concluded, Jeremiah offered up a beautiful prayer to God, in which it would seem he humbly asked the reason why he had been commanded to buy the field when it was in possession of the enemy. The Lord graciously vouchsafed to answer him by a full declaration of His intention to redeem His people from the land of their captivity, and to bring them back to Palestine, where they should serve Him, and 'bring the sacrifice of praise into the House of the Lord.'[1] Nor was this the only solace Jeremiah had at this period when, notwithstanding his personal sorrows, he was absorbed in the contemplation of the afflictions of his doomed country. The Almighty revealed to him His gracious designs respecting the everlasting covenant, and renewed the promise that He had made to David that the Saviour should descend from him. 'Behold (said the Lord) I will perform that good thing which I have promised unto the house of Israel and to the house of Judah. In those days, and at that time, will I cause the branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days, shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely; and this is the name wherewith she shall be called,

[1] Jer. xxxiii. 11.

The Lord our righteousness'[1]—'Jerusalem' (the Church). Christ it is that imparts righteousness to His Church, for He is made of God to us righteousness, and she, by bearing that name, professes to have her whole righteousness not from herself, but from Him. 'Of Him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.'[2]

From a passage in the prayer we have alluded to we gather that at the time the prophet purchased the field Jerusalem was not only in a state of siege, but was suffering from famine and pestilence, 'Behold the mounts, they are come unto the city to take it; and the city is given into the hand of the Chaldeans that fight against it, because of the sword, and of the famine, and of the pestilence: and what Thou hast spoken is come to pass; and, behold, Thou seest it.'[3] The mounts or banks so often mentioned as being erected by the besiegers of cities, were raised as high if not higher than the top of the walls being attacked. Three of the sides of these mounts were walled in with bricks or stones, or secured with strong rafters, to prevent them from falling. The part opposite the city was left bare, that it might by degrees be extended towards the walls as the enemy ventured to approach nearer. The pile itself consisted of all sorts of materials, as earth, timber, boughs, stones, &c. In the middle were cast only wickers and twigs of trees, to fasten

[1] *Jer.* xxxiii. 14–16. [2] 1 Cor. i. 30. [3] Jer. xxxii. 24.

and, as it were, cement the other parts. Movable towers of wood were usually placed upon the mounts. These towers were often several stories high, and were large enough to carry not only soldiers, but all sorts of portable engines capable of battering in walls and throwing down houses. We now understand how the mounts came into Jerusalem, and also of what use trees were in constructing them; 'Hew ye down trees, and cast a mount against Jerusalem: this is the city to be visited,'[1] said the Lord by the mouth of His prophet. In consequence of the repeated sieges Jerusalem had been exposed to, the neighbourhood became entirely divested of wood, for not only were trees hewn down for the erection of the mounts but to clear the ground. So far back as the days of Moses, trees were cut down by the Hebrews when besieging cities to aid in filling up ditches, and in the construction of mounts and embankments, and of towers and military engines; but as man in the East depends so much for sustenance upon fruit-bearing trees, one of the laws God mercifully commanded His people to observe was the following: 'When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by forcing an axe against them: for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down (for the tree of the field is man's life), to employ them in the siege: only the trees

[1] Jer. vi. 6.

which thou knowest that they be not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down; and thou shalt build bulwarks against the city that maketh war with thee, until it be subdued.'[1] The Egyptians were also by their law forbidden to destroy fruit-trees when besieging cities. The Assyrians and Chaldeans were, however, less scrupulous, and we should suppose the Romans also, for the Crusaders found the neighbourhood of Jerusalem entirely destitute of any kind of tree. Oh, how terrible to the doomed cities of Judah must have been the gradual approach of these mounts with their movable towers and engines of war carrying destruction with them in their slow but sure progress. No marvel that the famine-stricken, and plague-stricken, and awe-stricken pent-up ones in Jerusalem were driven to make an attempt at conciliating the long-insulted, long-suffering, but at length avenging God of Israel. We do not hear of any solemn assembly for the purpose of prayer and supplication; the contrition and faith of the sufferers did not, it would seem, carry them so far, but they did make a beginning, if we may so express it, of turning unto the Lord by entering into a covenant with Zedekiah to conform to the law of Moses in reference to bond-servants—a law which they had for some time abused. By this law the Israelites were not allowed to detain their brethren of the Hebrew race in perpetual bondage, but were required to

[1] Deut. xx. 19, 20.

let them go free after a servitude of six years. Perhaps Zedekiah was influenced in ordering the release of the bond-servants, not by religious motives, but from the necessity he was under of obtaining the services of as many men as possible in the defence of Jerusalem. Overawed by their fearful position the people released all those servants who were entitled by the law of God to their freedom. They made a very solemn covenant in a very sacred place to conform for the future to God's law. This covenant was ratified by a significant sign: 'They cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof, the princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests,'[1] were among those who entered into this solemn engagement. The calf was probably offered up in sacrifice to God, it was then divided into two parts, and those who were entering into the covenant that it might be ratified, passed between the parts, even as God's covenant with Abraham was ratified by 'a smoking furnace and a burning lamp'[2] passing between the parts of the beasts Abraham had by the Lord's command sacrificed and divided. Only for a brief period, however, did the faithless, infatuated men of Judah keep to their vow. The aspect of affairs changed. News reached the Chaldean camp that Pharaoh-Hophra was coming up out of Egypt with a great host to the relief of the Hebrews. Upon

[1] *Jer.* xxxiv. 18, 19. [2] Gen. xv. 17.

receiving this intelligence Nebuchadnezzar raised the siege of Jerusalem, and marched to meet the Egyptian army. Before raising the siege, however, he sent all the captive Jews which he had there in the camp, numbering eight hundred and thirty-two, to Babylon. When the Chaldeans had departed from Judah, Zedekiah sent two messengers to Jeremiah (the latter had been set at liberty) begging his prayers and advice. The king received an answer from the Lord through the prophet, to the effect that no dependence was to be placed upon Egypt, or upon any other nation, for if the whole army of Chaldeans lay wounded every man in his tent should rise up and burn Jerusalem with fire, so surely would the Divine judgment pronounced against the city be executed. One of the messengers sent by Zedekiah was a chief priest named Zephaniah. This was the second time Zephaniah had been despatched upon a similar errand and with the same results, and he it was to whom the treacherous captive Shemaiah appealed to punish Jeremiah as a false prophet. Once again we hear of the courtly chief priest, but not till the end had come. Notwithstanding the Divine assurance given through Jeremiah, that the Chaldeans would return to destroy Jerusalem, the people persuaded themselves that the enemy had disappeared for good. Relieved from the terror they had been thrown into by the investment of the city, they repented of the covenant they had

made with Zedekiah, and compelled every man-servant and every maid-servant whom they had set at liberty, to return to servitude. For this cruel act of injustice and breach of their covenant, the Lord passed upon them the sentence of death: 'I will give the men that have transgressed My covenant, which have not performed the words of the covenant which they had made before Me, when they cut the calf in twain, and passed between the parts thereof, the princes of Judah, and the princes of Jerusalem, the eunuchs, and the priests, and all the people of the land which passed between the parts of the calf; I will even give them into the hand of their enemies, and into the hand of them that seek their life: and their dead bodies shall be for meat unto the fowls of the heaven, and to the beasts of the earth.'[1]

Sick at heart, and wearied with his vain efforts to help his hardened countrymen, and knowing also that he would be of no service in the approaching siege (for his faith in God's word never wavered), Jeremiah resolved to leave Jerusalem, and retire to his native city Anathoth or to its neighbourhood, but as he was passing through the gate of Benjamin, the captain who kept guard there seized him, saying, 'Thou fallest away to the Chaldeans. Then said Jeremiah, It is false; I fall not away to the Chaldeans. But he hearkened not to him: so Irijah took Jeremiah, and brought him

[1] Jer. xxxiv. 18–20.

to the princes. Wherefore the princes were wroth with Jeremiah, and smote him, and put him in prison, in the house of Jonathan the scribe: for they had made that the prison.'[1] For many days Jeremiah lay in his loathsome dungeon, bruised in body and broken down in spirit. Doubtless his enemies intended to leave him there to die, but the Lord had more work for him to do. The terrible Chaldeans again appeared before Jerusalem, and invested the city. In the greatest alarm, Zedekiah had Jeremiah brought to him secretly, that he might ask him, if there were any word from the Lord. He doubtless clung to the hope that God would still relent and save the holy city.

It would seem from passages in Ezekiel, that Pharaoh-Hophra, although he had advanced with a powerful army into Judea, intending to relieve the besieged, and had made all preparations for attacking the Chaldeans ('he cast up forts and built mounts'[2]), did not on the approach of Nebuchadnezzar and his host hazard a battle, but returned to his own kingdom, leaving his allies the Hebrews to their fate. The position of Zedekiah was pitiable and contemptible in the extreme. Driven to the verge of despair, his only hope lay in an angry and indignant God, whose wrath he dare not, for *fear of his nobles*, make any open attempt to appease; nay, only secretly dare he hold any *communion* with God's faithful ambassador Jeremiah.

[1] Jer. xxxvii. 13-15. [2] Ezek. xvii. 17.

Bravely and successfully had his army defended the city during the first siege, but doubtless his subjects were buoyed up with the knowledge that Pharaoh-Hophra was preparing a great host to come to their rescue, and that daily the standard of the crocodile might be seen floating on the hills of Judah. But now all hope from treacherous Egypt must be abandoned; they were, however, determined to defend their home to the last, and if it came to the worst, to sell their lives or their liberty as dearly as possible. It was in this extremity Zedekiah sent for Jeremiah and asked him secretly, 'if there were any word from the Lord.' And Jeremiah said, 'There is: for (said he) thou shalt be delivered into the hand of the king of Babylon. Moreover, Jeremiah said unto king Zedekiah, What have I offended against thee, or against thy servants, or against this people, that ye have put me in prison? Where are now your prophets which prophesied unto you, saying, The king of Babylon shall not come against you, nor against this land? Therefore hear now, I pray thee, O my lord the king: let my supplication, I pray thee, be accepted before thee; that thou cause me not to return to the house of Jonathan the scribe, lest I die there.' Then Zedekiah the king commanded that they should commit Jeremiah into the court of the prison, and that they should give him daily a piece of bread out of the baker's

street, 'until all the bread in the city were spent.'[1] Before dismissing him, however, Zedekiah commanded Jeremiah not to let anyone know what had passed between them: 'If the princes (said he) hear that I have talked with thee, and they come unto thee, and say unto thee, Declare unto us now what thou hast said unto the king, hide it not from us, and we will not put thee to death; also what the king said unto thee: then thou shalt say unto them, I presented my supplication unto the king, that he would not cause me to return to Jonathan's house, to die there. Then came all the princes unto Jeremiah, and asked him: and he told them according to all these words that the king had commanded. So they left off speaking with him; for the matter was not perceived.'[2] Nothing could well be conceived more horrible than were the dungeons, such as the one Jeremiah was imprisoned in, when the king sent for him. These dungeons are described as deep square pits with cells, or as Jeremiah calls them, 'cabins,'[3] in the sides, situated some little distance from the bottom. To these cells the unfortunate prisoners were let down with ropes. As all refuse and filthy matter that accumulated in the cells, was flung to the bottom of the dungeon, and there lay, the atmosphere breathed by the wretched

[1] Jer. xxxvii. 17–21. [2] Ibid. xxxviii. 25–27.
[3] Ibid. xxxvii. 16.

prisoners must have been intolerable. Perhaps a number of these cells led from one to another, as Jeremiah speaks of entering the 'cabins.' It was a strange custom to have prisons and places of torment attached to palaces and great houses, and yet, repulsive as the close proximity to such misery must have been to every feeling heart, the ancient fashion has, in our own land, only been abolished within the last few centuries. Who can read of the torture chambers, and the dark damp dungeons of England's old palaces, and marvel at the cold indifference of the Oriental despot, who knew that beneath the floors of his banqueting halls lay fettered captives, writhing perchance, in the hands of their tormentors, or breathing their last in hopeless misery. Weak and worn with his cruel treatment must the patient and enduring Jeremiah have been, when he so pathetically entreated of the king, though he would not retract a word he had spoken, to save him from being sent back to his loathsome dungeon. He shrank not from death, which could only have been a blessed release to him, but the lingering torture of such a death as his enemies had consigned him to he craved to be spared. Zedekiah hearkened to his petition, and, though retaining him as a captive, he placed him where he would enjoy a certain amount of liberty, and, moreover, ordered a ration of bread to be given him daily, 'out of the bakers' *street, until all* the bread in the city were spent.'

With what renewed anguish must Jeremiah have quitted the palace after each interview with the unworthy son of the beloved and revered Josiah. How painfully must the cowardice, vacillation, and imbecility of the one, have contrasted with the boldness, decision, and nobleness of the other. Though the king had ventured, at the risk of incurring the displeasure of the princes, to take him out of their hands, the prophet knew that no reliance could be placed upon the continued protection of his weak-minded and treacherous sovereign, and that, humanly speaking, his only safety lay in his abstaining from any further effort to benefit his now despairing countrymen. But he could not be silent. Though weighed down with grief, and worn out with suffering and privation, his patriotic spirit was no less fervent that when, well-nigh half a century before, he had, in meek humility, and with implicit faith in God's promises, taken up the burden he was ordained to carry to the grave, or lay it down only when his beloved Judah was no more, and his countrymen even to the last remnant, slain or driven into exile. Neither the scourge, the stocks, nor the noisome dungeon, could silence that inspired tongue, and so the veteran champion still stood, 'a fenced brazen wall,'[1] invulnerable to the repeated attacks of his enemies; and yet that he felt his position most *keenly,* the bursts of grief that appear at intervals

[1] Jer. xv. 20.

in his writings, testify. Full of tenderness and the most devoted patriotism, what accusation could have more sorely wounded his sensitive spirit than that of treachery to his beloved country; he who for forty-seven years had borne the burden of Judah's woes, to be arraigned as a deserter and a traitor, and condemned as such. Truly did he say, 'I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of His wrath;'[1] and of himself he might have said, 'Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow.'[2] For several months, we suppose, Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison, in the king's house, which proved a welcome refuge to the persecuted prophet. So long as he remained in confinement, a daily allowance of bread was given him out of the military stores, whilst multitudes who were at liberty in the city were dying of hunger. The tender-hearted prophet, reckoned the most pitiful of all the prophets, was likewise spared the sight of much misery, which he must have witnessed had he been 'going in and out among the people.' To the lowest depth of suffering and despair the wretched Hebrews must have sunk, ere the final blow was struck. Those who ventured beyond the walls of Jerusalem were slain, whilst multitudes within the city were dying of hunger and of the pestilence, their dead bodies lying in the streets to be devoured by dogs and birds of prey. A vivid picture is drawn in those

[1] *Lam.* i. 3. [2] *Ibid.* 12.

exquisite elegies, the Lamentations of Jeremiah of the sufferings of the besieged, when there was 'no more bread in the city.'[1] In every dwelling high and low, on every terraced roof and broad highway, in every dark alley and secret chamber, at the foot of Jehovah's altar, and before the shrine of heathen god, crouched the victims of the terrible scourge—famine. Children crying in vain for bread, and swooning in the streets, or dying in their famished mothers' arms. The parched tongue of the sucking babe cleaving to the roof of his mouth for thirst, the fountain that nourished him being dried up. Those who had been reared in luxury, wandering desolate in the streets, without any shelter from the wet and cold, wealth, home, all, all bartered for food. The fairest, and most beautiful of Judah's princesses, that were 'purer than snow, and whiter than milk,'[2] now black, dry, and withered, their skin cleaving to their bones, 'because of the terrible famine,'[3] and (consummation of misery), mothers bereft (let us hope) of reason, feeding on their own children. Oh, why this lingering torture, why let the gaunt spectre triumph any longer over her bloody sister war? Must all, the young and the old, the strong and the weak, the faithful and the apostate, the noble and the serf, sink beneath her withering glance, craving death that will not come to their release? *Why not* unbar the gates and unman the towers,

[1] *Jer.* xxxviii. 9. [2] Lam. iv. 7. [3] Ibid. v. 10.

and let the fierce invaders enter. Their swords are drawn, their bows are bent, they only await the signal, and are not 'they that be slain with the sword better than they that be slain with hunger?'[1] But torture and death beyond even what famine could inflict, awaited the king and the other leaders in the rebellion, if they fell into the hands of the enraged Nebuchadnezzar, so capitulation must not be thought of. With zeal more fervent if possible, as the crisis drew nearer, Jeremiah endeavoured to persuade those about him to save themselves by a voluntary surrender to the commanders of the Chaldean forces. Nebuchadnezzar was not with his army, but was at Riblah, awaiting the result of the siege. The Judean princes, hearing that the dauntless prophet still persisted in what they considered his traitorous oratory, were greatly enraged, and petitioned Zedekiah to have him put to death, as a person dangerous to the state. They said unto the king: 'We beseech thee, let this man be put to death: for thus he weakeneth the hands of the men of war that remain in the city, and the hands of all the people, in speaking such words unto them: for this man seeketh not the welfare of this people, but the hurt.'[2] What answer did the king give to his impious and cruel nobles—he, Zedekiah, who a little while ago, distracted by his personal danger and awful misgivings of conscience, had sent secretly for the holy and venerable prophet

[1] *Lam.* iv. 9. [2] Jer. xxxviii. 4.

that he might, through him, know the will of God—'Behold, he is in your hand: for the king is not he that can do anything against you.'[1] Truly said, cowardly, treacherous Zedekiah. Oh, if but the faintest breath of thy father's noble spirit had lived in thee, thou wouldst have driven these base accusers from thy presence, and have hurled them into the pit thy honest devoted friend and counsellor was, by thy permission, cast into. How must the remembrance of thy perfidy to the holy servant of God have added to thy remorse, when fettered, blind, and penitent, thou wert dragging out thy last woful days in thy dungeon, 'by the waters of Babylon.' With the royal sanction, the princes took 'Jeremiah, and cast him into the dungeon of Malchiah the son of Hammelech, that was in the court of the prison. And they let down Jeremiah with cords. And in the dungeon there was no water, but mire: so Jeremiah sunk in the mire.'[2] Josephus says that the princes intended to put the prophet to death by suffocating him, and that he sank up to his neck in the mire. This horrible tomb into which the holy martyr was cast, was either a dungeon, such as we suppose that in the house of Jonathan the scribe to have been, or was the cesspool of the prison in the king's house. The eye of an indignant God was upon the impious murderers, and not one iota of their cruelty to His *faithful* servant was overlooked by Him. The

[1] Jer. xxxviii. 5. [2] Ibid. 6.

princes supposed they had accomplished their wicked purpose. They left their innocent victim struggling in the heaving mass of filth, and they doubtless congratulated themselves that they had for ever silenced that hated tongue which had for years, day by day, week by week, month by month, in the temple, the palace, the prison, and the streets of the city, proclaimed only one message for them, the impious, the proud and the defiant, and that message was Woe, woe, woe. The Lord had no thought of leaving His servant to perish in the dungeon. He might in a moment have raised him out of the mire and have set him on his feet in the court of the prison, but He chose to honour one of Africa's swarthy sons by allowing him the privilege of rescuing the great and holy prophet. This was Ebed-Melech, one of the royal eunuchs or chamberlains. He was an Ethiopian, probably descended from one of the slaves Josephus speaks of as having been brought by Solomon from Ethiopia. Whether Ebed-Melech had been converted to the true faith by Jeremiah or had been trained in it from infancy (his forefathers having possibly been officers of state in Judah) we know not—certain it is that he was a true servant of God, in the abandoned court of Zedekiah: one who could brave the anger of king, prince, or noble in a righteous cause. It would appear, that when the princes laid their petition before the king, the latter was sitting *in the gate of* Benjamin, that is, in the public

place of judicature, engaged either in administering justice, or more probably in counsel with his chief officers and generals. Having obtained possession, if we may so speak, of Jeremiah's person, the sacrilegious murderers lost no time in executing their brutal purpose, and with no less alacrity did Ebed-Melech, as soon as he heard of the treatment Jeremiah had received, hasten to Zedekiah, 'and spake to the king, saying, My lord the king, these men have done evil in all that they have done to Jeremiah the prophet, whom they have cast into the dungeon; and he is like to die for hunger in the place where he is: for there is no more bread in the city. Then the king commanded Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian, saying, Take from hence thirty men with thee, and take up Jeremiah the prophet out of the dungeon, before he die. So Ebed-Melech took the men with him, and went into the house of the king under the treasury, and took thence old cast clouts and old rotten rags, and let them down by cords into the dungeon to Jeremiah. And Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian said unto Jeremiah, Put now these old cast clouts and rotten rags under thine armholes, under the cords. And Jeremiah did so. So they drew up Jeremiah with cords, and took him up out of the dungeon: and Jeremiah remained in the court of the prison.'[1] With a heart beating with love for, and gratitude to, his preserver, would Jeremiah record the courage, faith, and tenderness

[1] Jer. xxxviii. 8–13.

of Ebed-Melech. In but very few words is the affecting and exciting story told, and yet but little imagination is needed to draw each scene, with all its repulsive and its beautiful features, as it is unfolded to us in the sacred narrative. The miserable king, harassed and despairing, his throne, his city, his kingdom on the very brink of destruction, still maintaining the semblance of a monarch, and occupying the judgment-seat in the court of judicature. In the midst of the caballing of arrogant counsellors, officers, and generals, who have failed in every effort they have made to preserve the city, and have grown desperate, four princes present themselves to make their petition to their lord the king. The perfidious tongues utter their base charge against the holy prophet, and nothing less than death will satisfy these *noble patriots.* The answer of the king betrays how powerless he is. Though knowing a more loyal subject and a more devoted patriot than Jeremiah never breathed, he without any attempt to exonerate the faithful prophet gives him up into the hands of his enemies, and maybe, tries to persuade himself that the blood of Jeremiah, if shed, will not be on his head. We next follow the murderers as they hasten to the court of the prison. They seize the holy martyr, and with fiendish pleasure drag him to the brink of the pit, and there perchance gloat for a moment over the fetid bed of filth at the bottom, before *lowering their* victim into what they design to be

his grave. They do not bind his hands or feet; no need for that. For if he could lift himself out of the mire he could not crawl up the smooth, slimy, perpendicular walls that hem him in on every side. So they would argue, and, moreover, though they knew it not, the Lord would have those precious limbs left at liberty. We do not hear of the princes taking with them a body of men to guard against any attempt at rescue on the part of Jeremiah's friends, nor do we hear of any Judean interfering in the prophet's behalf—none of the faithful Hebrews may have been at the time in the vicinity of the palace, or if there were any, suffering and terror had rendered them incapable of action. Besides, it was only the assistance of one high in favour at court which could have availed to stay the cruel deed. There was such an one, an Ethiopian, willing and ready to brave the anger of king and princes, for the sake of the holy prophet. How often are we reminded that Ebed-Melech was an Ethiopian, one of a despised and accursed race, not a proud son of Israel. With all speed this royal chamberlain hastens to his master, and with flashing eye upbraids the king for what his nobles have done. Zedekiah, as though surprised that his princes should have abused their power so far, at once orders his Ethiopian servant to rescue Jeremiah out of the pit; and that the princes may *not* frustrate Ebed-Melech in his pious task, the *king* commands the latter to take thirty men with

him. Thus attended, Ebed-Melech returns to the palace. His first care is to provide himself with a sufficient supply of old linen, and then he hastens to the scene of torture. Jeremiah is still living, and the Lord is near him, sustaining him, and bidding him 'fear not.'[1] Look up, blessed saint, for He who has bidden thee fear not, has sent a friend to raise thee from thy loathsome bed. The soft cushions of old linen are let down with cords, and Jeremiah told by Ebed-Melech to put the 'old cast clouts and old rotten rags' under his armholes, that the cords which must draw him up may not cut the flesh perhaps already wounded, for with no gentle force would the patient sufferer have been handled by the princes. The prophet does as he is desired. The short and perilous journey is accomplished and the exhausted Jeremiah carried to a place of safety. It was reward enough to the faithful, loving Ebed-Melech to see his revered friend delivered out of the horrible pit, but the Lord would not suffer the pious zeal of the Cushite to pass unacknowledged by Him. He desired Jeremiah to 'go and speak to Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian, saying, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will bring My words upon this city for evil, and not for good; and they shall be accomplished in that day before thee. But I will deliver thee in that day, saith the Lord: and thou shalt not be given into the hand of the men of

[1] Lam. iii. 57.

whom thou art afraid. For I will surely deliver thee, and thou shalt not fall by the sword, but thy life shall be for a prey unto thee: because thou hast put thy trust in Me, saith the Lord.'[1] The expression, 'Thy life shall be for a prey unto thee' is a proverbial one, and means that the life of Ebed-Melech to whom the promise was given, should be preserved under such circumstances, that he should have reason to feel that he was indebted to the favour of Divine protection, as a recompense for the benefit he had conferred. We hear no more of Ebed-Melech. Whether he escaped to the land of his forefathers, during the sacking of the city by the Chaldeans, which he must at least in part have witnessed, or whether he was one of the captives in Babylon, we know not; but wherever he went he carried with him the blessing of the Almighty, and maybe planted by the river of the 'great dragon' that precious seed, a germ of which, six hundred years afterwards, was found in the breast of the Ethiopian eunuch, who, near one of Judah's wasted cities was overtaken in his chariot by Philip the deacon, as he was pondering over the predicted sufferings of Jeremiah's great antitype, the Saviour of the world.

Notwithstanding his cowardly conduct towards Jeremiah, Zedekiah again sought an interview with the prophet, taking every precaution that the *meeting* should be a secret one. He took Jere-

[1] Jer. xxxix. 16–18.

miah 'into the third entry that is in the house of the Lord.'[1] The king led the prophet most probably to the farthest part of the passage, which ran from the palace to the priests' court, and terminated with the brazen scaffold on which Solomon knelt when he offered up his prayer at the dedication of the Temple. Oh, what a contrast did the scene now enacted in the sacred court present to that in which Solomon (elevated on the costly brazen platform) spread forth his hands, and in the hearing of all the congregation of Israel, a vast assembly of devoted, confiding, and admiring subjects, lift up his prayer to the great Father of Israel. Was ever king of Israel so exalted as was the son of David in that hour? Was ever king of Israel so abased as when Zedekiah stood trembling before the holy servant of God, and taking his oath that he would not deal treacherously with him? No fear of intrusion. That marble pavement that had so often echoed with the tread of Jehovah's priests was deserted now, unless maybe a few famine-stricken ones have come to breathe a prayer in their last hour for forgiveness, and then die on the hallowed spot. 'The king said unto Jeremiah, I will ask thee a thing; hide nothing from me. Then Jeremiah said unto Zedekiah, If I declare it unto thee, wilt thou not surely put me to death? and if I give thee counsel, wilt thou not hearken

[1] Jer. xxxviii. 14.

unto me?'[1] No marvel that Jeremiah had little faith in the honour of Zedekiah. He had no welcome message from the Lord to deliver, and he knew that his counsel would not be heeded. Willingly would he have laid down his life to save his king and country, but why risk it when by so doing he would benefit no one, and his death would but aggravate the guilt of Zedekiah and his counsellors? Upon the king, however, taking a solemn oath that he would neither put him to death nor deliver him into the hands of the princes, Jeremiah once more told Zedekiah that if he would surrender to the Chaldean generals, he and all his house should live, and the city be saved; but that if he refused to hearken to the word of the Lord, he and his house should go into captivity, and Jerusalem be burned with fire. Weak and childish in the extreme was the argument used by Zedekiah against this merciful proposition. 'I am afraid (he said) of the Jews that are fallen to the Chaldeans, lest they deliver me into their hand, and they mock me.'[2] In vain did Jeremiah reason and plead. The wretched king seemed incapable of action. Fear of his princes predominated over every other feeling, and he sent his faithful counsellor back to prison without giving him any encouragement to hope that his advice would be followed. 'Jeremiah abode in the court of

[1] Jer. xxxviii. 14, 15. [2] Ibid. 19.

the prison until the day that Jerusalem was taken: and he was there when Jerusalem was taken.'[1]

We can readily believe that as the last scene drew near, when famine and pestilence ravaged the city, and the terrible mounts of the enemy, with their battering-rams and their towers, filled with archers, had approached close to the walls, and all hope of saving the city was abandoned, every malignant passion that had guided the wicked nobles and princes gave way to the wildest despair, and in their agony and terror even the hated Jeremiah was forgotten, and so permitted to live unmolested by them. We have only to study the Assyrian monuments to form a tolerably clear idea of the horror and terror of the inhabitants of a besieged city in ancient times, when the end was near and the enemy triumphant. Though the Assyrian sculptures have been dug out of the mounds of Nineveh, we may readily believe, from the close connexion of Babylon with Nineveh, and their proximity to each other, the usages of both nations in matters of state and war were very similar, if not the same. Consequently the sculptures of Nineveh may be safely regarded as illustrating Babylonian customs and practices. One of these deeply interesting monuments represents a fortified town, whose walls are being scaled by the

[1] Jer. xxxviii. 28.

enemy, and whose inhabitants, evidently in a state of despair, are, with arms raised, appealing for mercy, but no mercy is shown. One of the enemy has reached the top of a scaling ladder, and is thrusting his lance into the breast of an unarmed, imploring victim. With their long lances firmly grasped, as though fully bent upon using them, the warriors one after another mount the ladders, while the archers from below are busily at work, and one of the besieged, pierced with an arrow, is seen falling from the top of a tower into the valley below. Many of the besieged have fled to the upper town and citadel, which is in flames. Fourteen of the inhabitants, who had been seized, probably in attempting to effect their escape, are impaled in front of the city walls. The dreadful punishment of impalement was not uncommon in those days. Darius impaled three thousand of the chief nobility of Babylon; indeed, this cruel death was not unusual in Persia and Turkey a very few years ago. Prisoners were often impaled in sight of a besieged city to strike terror into the hearts of the inhabitants. On one of the ancient monuments we see three men impaled outside a besieged city. That the inhabitants may not escape the ghastly spectacle, the victims have suffered on a high mount, and their bodies are raised considerably above the city walls. In some of the scenes *headless* bodies are strewed on the ground; in

others soldiers are carrying dissevered heads, each soldier being rewarded according to the number of heads he laid at the feet of his sovereign. Birds of of prey—'ravenous birds'[1]—are constantly seen hovering over and accompanying the army, and during a siege attacking the wounded and the dead.

[1] Ezek. xxxix 4.

CHAPTER V.

IT was about the middle of July, a year and a half after the first investment of the city, that Jerusalem was taken. 'In the ninth year of Zedekiah king of Judah, in the tenth month, came Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon and all his army against Jerusalem, and they besieged it. And in the eleventh year of Zedekiah, in the fourth month, the ninth day of the month, the city was broken up. And all the princes of the king of Babylon came in, and sat in the middle gate, even Nergal-sharezer, Samgar-nebo, Sarsechim, Rab-saris, Nergal-sharezer, Rab-mag, with all the residue of the princes of the king of Babylon.'[1] Some commentators think that only three Babylonian princes are mentioned by name as having seated themselves in the court of the temple, the official title of each prince being given: Nergal-sharezer, who was Samgar-nebo (priest of the god Nebo), Sarsechim, who was Rab-saris (chief eunuch or chamberlain), and Ner*gal-sharezer*, who was Rab-mag (magian chief or

[1] Jer. xxxix. 1–3.

chief priest of the magi). Occasionally we find officers of state named only by their official titles. Sennacherib, we read, sent Tartan (commander-in-chief), Rab-saris (chief eunuch or chamberlain), and Rab-shakeh (chief cup-bearer), 'with a great host, against Jerusalem.'[1] It was the chief cup-bearer of Sennacherib who delivered the insolent message sent by his master to Hezekiah. The word Rab signifies chief or master. The Rab-mag (chief magian) always attended the Babylonian kings in their campaigns, and most probably Nergal-sharezer (Rab-mag) superintended the ceremonies of divination performed for the guidance of Nebuchadnezzar at 'the parting of the way,' when the Babylonian monarch was undecided which kingdom to march against first—Ammon or Judah.

All unconscious were the inhabitants of Jerusalem of what was taking place. At midnight the alarm was given that the Chaldeans had not only made a breach in the walls, but were already in possession of the Temple. The moon, nine days old, had sunk behind the hills which formed the western edge of the basin of Jerusalem, or was, at any rate, too low to illuminate the utter darkness of the narrow streets. The famished and exhausted soldiers had left the ramparts, and there had been nothing to oppose the entrance of the Chaldeans. Vain would it be to attempt to describe the scene

[1] 2 Kings, xviii. 17.

when in the dark and silent night was heard the cry, 'Jerusalem is taken.' Suddenly, as though by magic touch, would the slumbering city start to life, and with one wild shriek of agony proclaim that all was lost, and then, perchance in silent terror, await her doom. Our thoughts are with the multitude—the people—of whom we hear but little, for cravens as they were the king, the nobles, and the warriors fled, leaving the helpless citizens to their fate. But details there are none of what occurred on that fatal night after the Babylonian princes had seated themselves in the Temple save those relating to the royal family and the army, nor do we know what afterwards befell any individual of the Hebrews save a few of those who occupy a conspicuous place in the history of the last days of Judah. Upon receiving intelligence that the Chaldeans had entered the city, Zedekiah with his army succeeded in carrying out in part what was doubtless a preconcerted plan, 'They fled, and went forth out of the city by night, and by the way of the king's garden, by the gate betwixt the two walls.'[1] Josephus says that Zedekiah's wives and children escaped with him; indeed, the Bible tells us that the royal princes were with their unhappy father. All the principal gates would be well guarded by the enemy who surrounded the city. It would, therefore, be through a postern-door, probably a *private* one, that the terrified party issued, and

[1] Jer. xxxix. 4.

favoured by the darkness passed in safety the Chaldean camp. They then fled over Olivet, and had reached the Jordan valley when they were (according to Josephus) met and recognised by some Jews who had gone over to the Chaldeans. These deserters and traitors hastened to the city and betrayed to the Babylonian princes the route of the fugitives. At break of day Zedekiah and his companions saw that they were being hotly pursued. Most of the Judean warriors fled in every direction, leaving their king, and the women and the children, almost defenceless. The royal family, with a few nobles and captains who had not deserted Zedekiah in his last extremity, were overtaken near Jericho, and were at once captured. What afterwards became of the women we know not; but the daughters of the king, not yet past their girlhood, we more than once hear of again, and each time in company with Jeremiah. The wretched Zedekiah, his sons, and his friends, were taken to Nebuchadnezzar, who was still at Riblah. Full leisure would Judah's captive king have in that long journey of three hundred miles to reflect upon his awful position. The prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel relating to him were being fulfilled; but the mystery was not yet solved. Would he be taken to Babylon and after awhile be pardoned and sent back to Judah to again reign over it, and at last die in peace and be buried with regal honours as *Jeremiah's* prophecy would imply? But why should

he be treated more leniently than his unhappy nephew, Jehoiachin, who for well-nigh eleven years had been languishing in his dungeon in Babylon without yet any hope of release? What said Ezekiel? He spoke the words of the Lord as truly as Jeremiah. The prediction of the captive prophet would force itself upon Zedekiah, and as he pondered over the prophecy, 'I will bring him to Babylon, the land of the Chaldeans; yet shall he not see it, though he shall die there,'[1] the horrible truth perchance dawned upon the mind of the king, and he knew in part his coming fate.

Surrounded by all the gorgeous state an Oriental monarch loved to display to a fallen compeer, Nebuchadnezzar awaited the arrival of the prisoners at Riblah. Was Riblah Antioch, or was she the lovely Daphne, or did the city become desert that witnessed the affecting scene when the last king of Judah, his sons, and his nobles, stood in the presence of their terrible foe? Zedekiah was arraigned, tried, convicted, and condemned as a rebel and a traitor. Nebuchadnezzar 'gave judgment upon him.'[2] The Hebrew phrase literally is, 'discoursed judgments with him,' and implies all the separate steps of a judicial process. With a refinement of cruelty characteristic of those cruel times, Nebuchadnezzar ordered the sons of Zedekiah to be executed in the presence of their father. It was a maddening sight for the fond parent. Surely the

[1] *Ezek.* xii. 13. [2] Jer. xxxix. 5.

anguish he endured as he heard the cries of agony and witnessed the death-struggles of his children ought to have satisfied the vengeance of the most barbarous enemy; but no, those aching eyes had no sooner looked upon the lifeless form of the last victim than they were torn from their sockets, that the mangled bodies of his sons might be impressed upon his heart as the last spectacle he had seen on earth, and ever after haunt his imagination. The nobles who had been taken to Riblah with their king, were also put to death, probably with much unnecessary torture. Ostentatious pride and revenge were the ruling passions of the Oriental monarch, not of Nebuchadnezzar in particular, but of all Eastern despots. One mode of indulging these passions was to exercise the most barbarous cruelty towards prisoners of war, especially when such were of high rank. They thus not only gratified their feelings of hatred and revenge, but impressed all by whom they were surrounded with a *becoming* sense of their terrible and unlimited power. The history, both sacred and profane, of the times of which we are reading, affords many instances of cruelty exercised towards prisoners of rank which cannot be read without a thrill of horror. When Adoni-bezek, king of Bezek, was vanquished by the tribe of Judah, he was taken prisoner and was punished by having his thumbs and great toes cut off. 'And Adoni-bezek said, Threescore and ten kings, *having their* thumbs and their great toes cut off,

gathered their meat under my table. As I have done so God hath requited me.'[1] For years must this inhuman monster have revelled in the abject misery of those who had once been his equals and rivals. Seventy petty sovereigns had in their turn been subdued by the powerful Canaanite, and each of the seventy had been compelled, with their mutilated hands, to gather up their food which was thrown to them as they grovelled beneath the table of their conqueror. In profane history we read that Assur-balipal, king of Nineveh, returned home after a successful campaign against the Elamites, heading his triumphal procession as it entered the Assyrian capital in his chariot, attended by musicians playing on their instruments and followed by his army and a long train of prisoners. Among the last were Dunanu, king of Gambuli, and Samgunu, his brother. Round the neck of the former was a cord, and attached to it hung in front of his breast the severed head of Teumman, king of Elam. Round the neck of Samgunu hung, in a similar manner, the head of Tamritu, the son of the Elamite monarch. The two brothers who had through the toilsome march borne in front of them the ghastly trophies were, with other principal prisoners, put to death in Nineveh in the most barbarous manner. They were each pinned to the ground by four stakes run through the body, their *tongues* were then torn out, and they were lastly

[1] Judg. i. 7.

flayed alive. And later on, even when Christianity with all its softening influences was rapidly taking the place of heathenism, we read that Sapor (Shahpoor) king of Persia, having taken the Roman Emperor Valerian prisoner, exposed him in all the cities of his (Sapor's) empire to the insults and ridicule of his subjects, using him as a footstool whenever he mounted his horse. The cruel Persian at length caused his victim to be flayed alive, and even there his barbarity did not end, for he ordered salt to be thrown over the writhing body, and Valerian died in the greatest torments. But we are dealing with sacred not with profane history, and the former, in all its details, is alone reliable. In profane history, deeds of prowess, grandeur, success in war, and *barbarous cruelty*, are in the narration often greatly exaggerated, whilst those of cowardice, defeat, and humiliation are, if possible, suppressed. For instance, Isaiah and the sacred chroniclers of Judah give an account of one of the most appalling calamities that ever befell an army, the destruction, in one night, of a hundred and eighty-five thousand Assyrian warriors by a Divine stroke, yet nowhere in the history of Assyria by her own chroniclers has yet been found any allusion to this overwhelming tragedy. In the British Museum are two colossal human-headed bulls brought from Assyria. On these monuments are inscribed the records of Sennacherib, among which is a list of the cities of Judah the Assyrian king had conquered.

The list is accompanied by a series of bas-reliefs, believed to represent the siege and capture of Lachish. Sennacherib is seen occupying a magnificent throne under a pavilion, pitched within sight of the besieged city. The proud monarch tells us in one of the inscriptions, that he shut up Hezekiah in Jerusalem like a caged bird, and that Hezekiah humbled himself to him, and gave him as tribute thirty talents of gold, eight hundred talents of silver, precious stones of various sorts, couches and thrones of ivory, skins and horns of buffaloes, girls and eunuchs, male and female musicians, &c. Thus minutely did Sennacherib record indelibly, as he believed, his successful campaign against Judah, his failure he would fain have had buried in oblivion; but God willed it otherwise, and whilst, for ages, Sennacherib's colossal bulls, slabs, bricks, cylinders, prisms, barrels, and tablets, on which were inscribed his triumphs and his glory were entombed beneath heaps of rubbish, forgotten and unknown, the story of his tremendous overthrow in Judah, and his ignominious death, was familiar in every home that owned the sacred chronicles of God's people—Israel.

The anguish both of body and mind Zedekiah endured as he lay fettered in his dungeon at Riblah, must have been fearful. He was a pitiable and loathsome object with his mutilated visage, and possessing not one ray of comfort to cheer his burdened spirit or lighten one passing moment of

his, so far as this life was concerned, interminable night. How long he was kept at Riblah we are not told, but we may suppose that he remained there till Nebuchadnezzar was prepared to return to Babylon, for the king of Judah would be required to grace the triumphal procession as it entered the Babylonian capital. We imagine the miserable king was spared one of the insults commonly offered in those times to monarchs and princes who had the misfortune to fall into the hands of their conquerors. This was being led by a cord or rope which was attached to a ring passed through the lips, and sometimes also the nostrils of the prisoner. 'I will put My hook in thy nose, and My bridle in thy lips, and I will turn thee back by the way by which thou camest,'[1] was part of the message the Lord sent in His anger to Sennacherib. The force of this sentence is brought vividly before us in some of the representations on the Assyrian monuments so lately disentombed at Nineveh. An engraving is now before us of one of these sculptures. In the centre stands the principal figure, a king in royal robes, he is attended by his Rab-shakeh (cup-bearer) and other officers of state. Three captives, conquered monarchs we take them to be, are before him. One is kneeling, the other two are standing. Each prisoner has his hands raised as if imploring mercy, and each is heavily manacled and fettered, and has a ring

[1] 2 Kings, xix. 28.

through his lips, to which is attached a cord tightly held in one hand by the dread conqueror who, with the other hand is gouging out the eyes of the kneeling suppliant, using his spear as his instrument of torture. It is a horrible scene.

'Princes are hanged up by their hand,'[1] said Jeremiah, when recounting the miseries he and his fellow-countrymen endured at this sad period. We know not whether the prophet meant the princes and nobles who accompanied Zedekiah to Riblah, or others who failed in escaping from Jerusalem after the Chaldeans had entered the city, or whether these unfortunate nobles were, after being hung up by the hand, left to die a lingering and agonising death, or were only thus tortured to degrade them to the utmost (hanging by the hand being the punishment commonly inflicted upon refractory slaves), and were after a time released to be led to the dungeon or to execution.

For nearly a month it would seem the Babylonian princes, into whose hands Jerusalem had fallen, were occupied in sacking the city and in carrying out the wishes of their sovereign as regarded the wretched Hebrews. Though certain license would be given to the Chaldean soldiers to gratify their brutal passions upon the vanquished, care seems to have been taken to secure the ringleaders of the revolt who had not effected their escape. These *were* men of rank, and were to be taken to Riblah

[1] Lam. v. 12.

to be judged by Nebuchadnezzar himself. A vast number of Jews were also saved from death that they might be carried to Babylon, where, in one form or another, they would be turned to account for the good of the empire. The lives also of many of the labouring class were spared, that some might be left 'at home' to cultivate the soil. The aged and the feeble were, it is to be feared, butchered without mercy. Of the horrors of that month we can form no conception, and very few details have been handed down to us. In the Book of Kings we are only told of the burning of the city, the destruction of the walls, and the carrying away of the captives and spoil. In the Chronicles we find a few more particulars. We read there that the Chaldees slew the 'young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion upon young man or maiden, old man, or him that stooped for age.'[1] Jeremiah in his historical chapters tells us no more, but from certain passages in his prophecies and his lamentations, we gather that Jerusalem was spared none of the outrages usually committed at that period in a conquered city abandoned to the fury of an excited, enraged, and brutal soldiery. That the carnage was fearful we know from the prediction of Jeremiah. The prophet, speaking of Tophet, said, 'Therefore, behold the days come, saith the Lord, that it shall no more be

[1] 2 Chron. xxxvi. 17.

called Tophet, nor the valley of the son of Hinnom, but the valley of slaughter: for they shall bury in Tophet, till there be no place. And the carcases of this people shall be meat for the fowls of the heaven, and for the beasts of the earth; and none shall fray them away.'[1] And what said the psalmist and prophet when lamenting the destruction of Jerusalem:—

'O God, the heathen are come into Thine inheritance;
Thy holy temple have they defiled;
They have laid Jerusalem on heaps.
The dead bodies of Thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven,
The flesh of Thy saints unto the beasts of the earth.
Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem;
And there was none to bury them.'[2]

It was on the ninth of the month Thamuz, that the Chaldeans entered Jerusalem, and on the seventh of the month following (Ab) 'came Nebuzar-adan, captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, unto Jerusalem.'[3] Nebuzar-adan, it is supposed, was not with the Chaldean host before Jerusalem during the siege, but was occupied with more important warlike operations against Tyre. Nebuzar-adan was captain of Nebuchadnezzar's body-guard, Rab-tabbachim (chief of the slaughtermen or executioners) was his title. The office of the Rab-tabbachim was one of the highest at the Babylonian court, next, indeed, to that of the

[1] *Jer. vii. 32, 33.* [2] Ps. lxxix. 1–3. [3] 2 Kings, xxv. 8.

monarch himself. Arioch held this post at the time Nebuchadnezzar condemned to death all the wise men in Babylon (including Daniel) because they could not interpret his lost dream. Notwithstanding his cruel office, Arioch proved himself much more merciful than his unreasonable and despotic master, and Nebuzar-adan was no less moderate and prudent than his predecessor. The Lord employs what instruments He chooses for the carrying out of His purpose, whether such purpose be of mercy or of judgment. The monarch and the slave, the strong and the weak, the cruel and the tender-hearted, the idolater and the true worshipper, are all in turn His servants. Ebed-Melech the Ethiopian eunuch was employed by Him to rescue the holy Jeremiah; the Babylonian chief executioner Arioch was the blessed means of preserving the life of Daniel; and now we find Jeremiah intrusted to the care of the heathen Nebuzar-adan, who arrived at Jerusalem with a special commission from his sovereign lord to secure the safety and comfort of the revered prophet. 'Now Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon gave charge concerning Jeremiah to Nebuzar-adan the captain of the guard, saying, Take him, and look well to him, and do him no harm; but do unto him even as he shall say unto thee.'[1] Nebuchadnezzar had already appointed a governor over the husbandmen that were to be left in Judea, to till the ground and dress the

[1] Jer. xxxix. 11, 12.

vines. This governor was none other than Gedaliah the son of Jeremiah's faithful friend and protector, Ahikam, and grandson of Josiah's venerable and confidential scribe Shaphan. Gedaliah had probably surrendered himself to the Chaldeans during the siege. He knew that Jerusalem must fall, and, like Jeremiah, he may have given offence to the perverse and infatuated nobles at court, and have felt that he could be of no service to his weak-minded and vacillating king, and so following the advice of Jeremiah, and indeed obeying the will of God, he had sought the protection of Nebuchadnezzar, to whom he was very possibly personally known. Faithfully did Nebuzar-adan execute his commission as regarded the imprisoned prophet, though the latter was not at once set at liberty. Fettered as he had been in the court of the prison, Jeremiah was with a crowd of captives sent to Ramah, a city of the tribe of Benjamin, situated, as is supposed, about five miles from Jerusalem. Not long did the heart-broken prophet remain at Ramah, for the third day after the arrival of Nebuzar-adan at Jerusalem, beheld the holy city in flames. Jerusalem's last hour has come, and not a relic must be left to tell of her far-famed beauty. In every quarter the doomed city has been fired and is one vast blazing pile. There is no one to help her, friend and foe alike stand aloof, the one gazing on in wild despair, the other in triumphant joy. She writhes, and shrieks,

and roars in her dying agonies, and the bright summer sun is hidden by the dense black smoke of her burning. For a few hours the deadly element rages, then exhausted all the sooner by its own fury, sinks and smoulders among the ruins it has made. Night draws in and the moon rises upon a pitiable scene of desolation and horror. The wreck of Jerusalem stands like a spectral city in the pale light, her blackened pillars and bare walls casting their ghostly shadows on the ruins around. No signs of life are near, for even the beasts and birds of prey have been scared from their favourite haunts, though Hinnom with its unburied dead would tempt them to a ghastly feast. The ruthless Chaldeans are resting from their labours, or in distant camp are carousing over their well-earned spoil; and the poor captive Hebrews in Ramah, if they in cruel mockery had been marshalled out to behold from afar their beloved, their beautiful Jerusalem in flames, are now safely secured for the night, some to weep, some to pray, and some to curse, but all alike unutterably wretched. The slopes of Olivet defaced and bare, scorched and blackened, rise out of the dark valley, the summit of the holy hill crowned (can we doubt it?) with many an impaled victim, while at her foot the Kidron slowly flows impeded in her course by many a putrid corpse. Daylight returns, and the destroyers are again at work, for their task is not *yet finished.* Not torch and firebrand their wea-

pons now, but pickaxe, wedge, and hammer. Neither pillar, wall, nor tower must stand as a relic of past glory—to the letter must God's word be fulfilled, and Jerusalem must drink her cup of woe and degradation to the dregs. The marble pillars, the massive towers, and the ancient walls succumb to the irresistible foe, and Jerusalem is no more. On the great funereal pile her ashes lay for fifty years and more, a monument of Judah's ingratitude, apostasy, and rebellion. Two thousand years have passed away since then, and still the children of Israel, as did their forefathers, the captives in Babylon, the scattered tribes, and the remnant left in Judah, mourn with fasting and prayer the fall of their first Jerusalem. True, she rose again, and became once more the pride and joy of Israel, a 'princess' unrivalled perhaps, for beauty, but her chief glory was gone. God's holy Temple of marble and cedar gleaming in the noonday sun again crowned the sacred Moriah. But though neither gold nor silver and other preicous gifts were wanting to enrich the sacred pile, in the Holiest Place were no longer seen the ark of the covenant and the mercy-seat which was upon it; neither the Shekinah, the symbol of the Divine presence. The Urim and Thummim had disappeared, and no holy fire descended upon the altar, and when the foundation was laid, the ancient men that had seen the first house, wept with a loud voice, because the second *could not* be compared with it for glory.

Of the splendid pile of buildings which composed what is generally spoken of as Solomon's temple, we can only venture upon a short description of the actual temple (called in the Bible 'the house of the Lord'). Many doubtless have expressed surprise when told that Solomon's Temple, exclusive of the outbuildings, was not so large as many of our parish churches, being but a hundred and fifty feet in length, and a hundred and five in breadth. The courts, cloisters, and other outbuildings, however, occupied, with the house, a perfectly square area, enclosed in a wall one thousand four hundred and sixty feet long on every side. The labour of preparing such a site on the top of a mountain must have been enormous. A few lines only will be necessary to sketch the main features of the exquisite building—the house of God—of which the Lord Himself was the architect. In external appearance, but not in internal, it resembled a church, with nave and side aisles, and rose on the western side of the great square enclosure, as it were one huge block of polished marble, so skilfully were the stones of which it was built cemented together. The roof was of cedar overlaid with gold. It was composed of three apartments—the porch, the sanctuary or holy place, and the holy of holies, in neither of which any but priests might enter, not even the Levites, and in the holy of holies only the high-priest, and he but once a-year, namely, on the

great day of atonement. Twelve marble steps on the western side of the altar of burnt-offerings, with its gigantic laver of molten brass, led to the great golden folding doors of the porch. On each side of these doors was a pillar of hollow brass. That on the right hand was called Jachin, that on the left Boaz, names importing that God alone was the support of the Temple. These two famous pillars, with their richly ornamented capitals, were the masterpieces of the art of the renowned Tyrian architect and artificer Hiram. Upon entering the porch nothing was to be seen but pure gold, precious stones, and curtains of embroidered blue, purple, and crimson silk, cloth, and the finest linen. The same with the sanctuary and holy of holies. The three rooms were floored with planks of fir, overlaid with plates of gold. The walls and ceilings were of cedar, exquisitely carved, representing cherubim and palm-trees, and clusters of foliage and open flowers, all overlaid with pure gold and garnished with precious stones. Beyond the sanctuary was the holy of holies, which was divided from the rest of the Temple by a partition of cedar, in the centre of which was a pair of folding-doors of olive-wood, very richly carved with palm-trees, and open flowers, and cherubim, the whole, like the rest, overlaid with gold. The door forming the entrance to the holy of holies was left open, and the space covered by a magnificent veil or curtain. In this most holy place were the ark of

the covenant and two colossal hovering cherubim of pure gold, above which, after God had, as it were, taken possession of His house or palace, rested the visible symbol of Jehovah's presence, called 'the glory of the Lord,'[1] or the Shekinah. We are not told the form of the cherubim—only their height—and that their wings were spread across the room, which was thirty feet square, and that 'they stood on their feet and their faces were inward.'[2] The overlaying of the interior of the holy of holies alone amounted to 'six hundred talents'[3] of gold—equal to three millions six hundred thousand pounds of our money. The furniture of this gem of Oriental art corresponded with the building. Tables, candelabra, lamps, censers, vases, spoons, snuffers, bowls, and in fact all the utensils, were of pure gold. Truly nothing that king or people could bestow was thought too costly for 'the house of God.' 'Round about the Temple and against the walls thereof (as Josephus describes them) were built thirty cells or little houses, which served in the way of so many buttresses, and were at the same time no small ornaments to it; for there were stories of these cells one above another, whereof the second was narrower than the first, and the third than the second, so that their roofs and balustrades, being within each other, made three different terraces, as it were, upon which one might walk round the

[1] *1 Kings*, vii. 11. [2] 2 Chron. iii. 13. [3] Ibid. 8.

Temple. Within, these little houses were ceiled with cedar; their walls were wainscoted with the same, and embellished with carving and fretwork, overlaid with gold, which, with their dazzling splendour, made everything about them look glorious.' These chambers were for the priests; they were not built so high as the Temple, and it must have been above them that were the 'windows of narrow lights.'[1] These windows were doubtless of curious lattice-work, still used in the East, even where glass is known, as more favourable than glass to the coolness and ventilation which a warm climate demands. 'The Lord said that He would dwell in the thick darkness.'[2] His effulgent glory illumined the thickest darkness; no need, therefore, for windows or lamps in the holy of holies so long as He dwelt there. The sanctuary or holy place was lighted by the lamps of the ten golden candelabra, which stood 'five on the right side, and five on the left, before the oracle,'[3] the holy of holies. It is probable, therefore, that the windows of the Temple were for the purpose of ventilation more than for that of light. No staircases to the chambers or cells built round the house were to be seen, for the stairs were ingeniously contrived within the thickness of the walls, and the rooms led one into the other. These stories of chambers, which answered to the aisles of a church in the external appearance of the building, had no con-

[1] *1 Kings*, vi. 4. [2] Ibid. viii. 12. [3] Ibid. vii. 49.

nexion whatever with the interior of the Temple. The entire pile, including the preparation of the site, the stupendous foundations, the immense outer walls, the noble gates, the courts, shady colonnades, store chambers, vestries, &c., gave full occupation to a hundred and eighty thousand workmen for seven years and a half. The cost cannot be conceived.

It was a glorious day for Israel that on which the Temple was dedicated to the Most High. Who can read without emotion the scene of the dedication? The solemn removal of the ark of the covenant from Mount Zion to its place beneath the outspread wings of the cherubim in the Holy of Holies on Mount Moriah. The sacrificing of a multitude of sheep and oxen on the great altar of burnt-offerings 'which could not be told nor numbered for multitude;'[1] the assemblage of priests arrayed in their priestly garments, the choristers clothed in white linen with their cymbals, psalteries, and harps, and with them a hundred and twenty priests sounding with trumpets. 'And when they lifted up their voice with the trumpets and cymbals and instruments of music, and praised the Lord saying, For He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever: that then the house was filled with a cloud, even the house of the Lord; so that the priests could not stand to minister by reason of the cloud: for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of God.'[2]

[1] 2 Chron. v. 6. [2] Ibid. 13, 14.

Then Solomon seated on a high brazen platform, blessed the people, and briefly recapitulated the circumstances in which the building had originated, and under which it had been brought to a completion. He then after a solemn pause knelt down, and spreading forth his hands towards heaven, offered up his most beautiful prayer. 'Now when Solomon had made an end of praying, the fire came down from heaven, and consumed the burnt-offering and the sacrifices; and the glory of the Lord filled the house. And the priests could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord had filled the Lord's house. And when all the children of Israel saw how the fire came down, and the glory of the Lord upon the house, they bowed themselves with their faces to the ground upon the pavement, and worshipped, and praised the Lord, saying, For He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever.'[1] Sad, sad contrast between that hour of joy, patriotic pride, faith and devotion, and the one which beheld the blackened wreck of that costly pile being battered down by heathens, Jerusalem (whose beauty the Lord had perfected) in ruins, and her children, those who survived her fall, apostate, degraded, and despairing, being driven into exile!

The city utterly destroyed, Nebuzar-adan turned his attention to the captives in Ramah. He released the holy prophet from his fetters, and said

[1] 2 Chron. vii. 1–3.

to him, 'The Lord thy God hath pronounced this evil upon this place. Now the Lord hath brought it, and done according as He hath said: because ye have sinned against the Lord, and have not obeyed His voice, therefore this thing is come upon you. And now, behold, I loose thee this day from the chains which were upon thine hand. If it seem good unto thee to come with me into Babylon, come; and I will look well unto thee: but if it seem ill unto thee to come with me into Babylon, forbear: behold, all the land is before thee; whither it seemeth good and convenient for thee to go, thither go.'[1] Now might Jeremiah have thrown off the burden the Lord had laid upon him, reasonably might he have supposed that his mission was ended, for Judah was laid in the dust, and her kings, her priests, her princes, and her nobles, to whom he had been sent were slain or taken captive. A life not only of ease but of luxury was offered to the hitherto persecuted prophet. The choice was given him whether he would spend the rest of his days in his desolate home, mourning over the wreck of Jerusalem and struggling still with his perverse countrymen or go to Babylon there to live, cared for and honoured even as were Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego. But the patriot clung to his fatherland with all the devotion of a loving child for a suffering parent, and no tempting offer of Nebuzar-adan's could prevail

[1] Jer. xl. 2–4.

upon him to voluntarily leave his country. The sympathies of the great Babylonian officer (himself a true patriot) were with the holy Judean; fain would he have taken him to Babylon, not as a captive, but as a guest, and have himself watched over his safety and comfort. But delicacy forbade Nebuzar-adan pressing the matter, so without further persuasion he allowed Jeremiah to act as his feelings dictated. When he knew the decision of the prophet, he said to him, 'Go back to Gedaliah the son of Ahikam the son of Shaphan, whom the king of Babylon hath made governor over the cities of Judah, and dwell with him among the people: or go wheresoever it seemeth convenient unto thee to go. So the captain of the guard gave him victuals and a reward, and let him go.'[1] What a reproach were the faith, conduct, and noble sentiments of the great heathen officer to the unbelief, vindictive cruelty, obstinacy, and apostasy of the princes and priests of Judah. Nebuzar-adan was a worshipper of his country's god, Baal, yet he doubted not the justice of the God of Israel and His power over the people He called His own. It is evident also that Nebuzar-adan was not unacquainted with the true cause of Judah's fall. From the lips of the holy and noble captives in Babylon he might have learned the sad history of the Hebrews, their fatal apostasy, and their rebellion against their heavenly King. He may even have read the prophecies of

[1] Jer. xl. 5.

Jeremiah and Ezekiel, copies of which the captive princes of Judah would possess, and was noting their marvellous fulfilment. So far he grasped the truth, but no farther, and the God of Israel, the great Jehovah, was to him no more than Egypt's just and beneficent (false) god Osiris. He heard, read, saw, and believed, and with simple faith he reminded his prisoners that, not unwarned, the evil had come upon them, and that for their sins and disobedience they were punished, tacitly acknowledging that his sovereign Nebuchadnezzar was but an instrument in the hands of an angry and indignant God. But there was one among that abject crowd whom the great commander regarded with admiration, respect, and heartfelt sympathy, this was the persecuted prophet Jeremiah; and Nebuzaradan took him, and would have comforted him, and cared for him in his own luxurious home, maybe to his own everlasting peace; but not then, if ever, was his gracious offer accepted, and so he gave Jeremiah food and a present, and committed him to the care of Gedaliah, the new governor. 'Then went Jeremiah unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam to Mizpah: and dwelt with him among the people that were left in the land.'[1] The Chaldeans were now prepared to take their departure from the land they had desolated. Quickly, when the word was given, would the camp be broken up, and the captives, with many a cruel

[1] Jer. xl. 6.

blow and insulting jest, be led and driven to their allotted places in the great procession which took the direction eastward; and as it slowly disappeared a voice was heard in desolate, deserted Ramah, 'lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not.'[1] In a beautiful figure of poetry Jacob's beloved wife Rachel, whose sepulchre was not far from Jerusalem, is represented by Jeremiah as rising from her grave, and seeing none of her offspring supposes that they are utterly extirpated, and with lamentation and weeping bewails her loss. Following out the figurative allusion, the Almighty is represented as comforting the heart-broken mother, 'Refrain thy voice from weeping, and thine eyes from tears: for thy work shall be rewarded, saith the Lord; and they shall come again from the land of the enemy. And there is hope in thine end, saith the Lord, that thy children shall come again to their own border.'[2] The bereaved Rachel was comforted. Her faith and patient expectation were rewarded, for her children returned to Zion, and the hills of Judea resounded with their songs of joy.

Whatever favours and liberty the Babylonian prisoners of war enjoyed in the land of captivity, their passage to it under the escort of brutal troopers, careless of their ease and indifferent to their suffering, would be replete with hardship.

[1] Jer. xxxi. 15. [2] Ibid. 16, 17.

The only care of the Chaldeans after so long a campaign would be to accomplish the journey home as speedily, and with as little loss of life, as possible. No compassion had they for the sick, the weak, and the broken-hearted of their prisoners who dare only, by appealing looks and raised hands, plead for a little mercy if urged on beyond their strength, appeals answered too often by the mocking laugh or savage blow; and ere the plains of Babylon were seen, many a fainting one had found a death-bed on the desert's burning sand, or happily beneath the shade of friendly tree, or rock, or ruin. 'And the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest, and Zephaniah, the second priest, and the three keepers of the door; he took also out of the city an eunuch, which had the charge of the men of war; and seven men of them that were near the king's person, which were found in the city; and the principal scribe of the host, who mustered the people of the land; and three-score men of the people of the land, that were found in the midst of the city. So Nebuzar-adan, the captain of the guard, took them, and brought them to the king of Babylon, to Riblah. And the king of Babylon smote them and put them to death in Riblah, in the land of Hamath.'[1] These seventy-four Hebrews, who were executed at Riblah, had with others been the instigators of the revolt. They were all found in Jerusalem, doubtless, in

[1] Jer. lii. 24–27.

some place of concealment. The first mentioned was the chief priest Seraiah, whose pious grandson, the high-priest Jeshua, an eminent type of the Saviour, took such a conspicuous part in the rebuilding of the Temple after the return of the captives from Babylon. The next mentioned was Zephaniah, the second priest. He it was whom Zedekiah sent twice to Jeremiah to inquire of him the issue of the siege of Jerusalem, and to implore him to intercede with the Lord for the people. To Zephaniah, also, the base Shemaiah wrote from Babylon, remonstrating with him for not having punished Jeremiah as a false prophet. Next in order came three keepers of the door of the Temple. These are not to be understood as ordinary porters taken from the Levites, but priests who stood at the entrance of the Temple to receive the offerings of the people, and thus were keepers of the sacred treasury, an office of high trust and consideration. The 'eunuch which had the charge of the men of war,' or, as his title would be with us, 'commander-in-chief,' is next mentioned, and after him seven men who occupied posts of honour near the king. The 'principal scribe of the host,' or, in other words, the 'secretary of war' and sixty rulers, as Josephus calls them, completed the band of capital offenders who were all beheaded at Riblah, Nebuzar-adan being most probably their executioner. That the wretched conspirators suffered death by decapitation we are told by Josephus.

After mentioning Nebuzar-adan's arrival at Riblah with the seventy-four prisoners under his especial care: the Jewish historian says, 'So the king commanded the heads of the high-priest and of the rulers to be cut off there, but *he himself* led all the captives and Zedekiah to Babylon.' A little farther on Josephus tells us that 'when the king was come to Babylon, he kept Zedekiah in prison until he died, and buried him magnificently.' How long the last king of Judah lingered in his dungeon in Babylon we know not, nor how it was that his remains were treated with so much honour; we can only suppose that the Hebrews, who had become so influential at the court of Babylon, exerted themselves in behalf of their king and so obtained for the poor, worn-out body of their sovereign the respect due to it. Thus were the prophecies of Jeremiah and Ezekiel fulfilled to the letter. That Zedekiah died penitent, 'in peace,' we doubt not; his contrition and humble resignation in all probability moved the holy Hebrews to procure for him a funeral befitting his rank. No effort appears to have been made by Daniel or his friends to obtain any amelioration of Jehoiachin's punishment, and for thirty-six years this king of Judah remained a prisoner in Babylon wearing prison garments. To the last we are led to believe Jehoiachin continued hardened and impenitent, and for this reason we may conclude Daniel and the other Hebrew officers of state in Babylon made

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no effort to obtain his release. Daniel's influence over the mind of Nebuchadnezzar was at times so great that the mighty despot, who yielded to his generous and grateful impulses as readily as he did to his capricious and unreasonable ones, would not have refused his favourite any moderate request. The last we hear from sacred writers of Jehoiachin is as follows: 'And it came to pass in the seven-and-thirtieth year of the captivity of Jehoiachin, king of Judah, in the twelfth month, in the five-and-twentieth day of the month, that Evil-Merodach, king of Babylon, in the first year of his reign, lifted up the head of Jehoiachin, king of Judah, and brought him forth out of prison, and spake kindly unto him, and set his throne above the throne of the kings that were with him in Babylon, and changed his prison garments: and he did continually eat bread before him all the days of his life. And for his diet, there was a continual diet given him of the king of Babylon, every day a portion until the day of his death, all the days of his life.'[1]

During the seven years that Nebuchadnezzar was insane, suffering from a peculiar kind of madness called lycanthropy, wherein the patient imagines himself a beast, and insists upon leading the life of a beast, his son Merodach acted as regent, but abused his power to such a degree that Nebuchadnezzar upon his recovery had him imprisoned.

[1] Jer. lii. 31–34.

This wicked prince was called Evil (foolish) Merodach on account of his great profligacy and viciousness. His proper name was really only Merodach. St. Jerome says that an ancient Jewish tradition is that the prison Evil-Merodach was confined in was the same that Jehoiachin had so long occupied, and that the two royal captives becoming thus acquainted formed a lasting friendship. Nebuchadnezzar lived only a year after his recovery from his terrible and most humiliating malady, and his death was the signal for Jehoiachin's release from his long imprisonment. When scarcely nineteen years of age, the Judean king had entered his dungeon, not to quit it till the vigour of life was past, or, more probably in his case, till premature old age had bent his figure, silvered his hair, and wrinkled his brow. Evil-Merodach was taken out of prison to ascend the throne of Babylon, and probably the two friends quitted the gloomy cell together. Not content with setting Jehoiachin at liberty, the new king conferred upon him the highest marks of favour, admitting him to his table, placing his throne above the throne of the kings that were in Babylon, assigning him an annual pension, and everything suitable for his now exalted position. The inference to be drawn from all this is, that Evil-Merodach, who after his father's death followed his former abandoned course, found in Jehoiachin a willing partner in his guilty pleasures. Soon, however, was the wicked

career of Evil-Merodach and that of his friend cut short. The former became through his profligacy and other excesses so intolerable, that (according to some authorities) his sister's husband, Neriglissar, supposed to have been the Rab-mag (chief magian) of Nebuchadnezzar's court at the time Jerusalem was taken, headed a conspiracy against him, and put him to death. Jehoiachin did not outlive his patron, and it is supposed that, as a favourite of the tyrant's, he was slain with him.

CHAPTER VI.

WE have followed the Judean exiles to Babylon, and would willingly remain with them, tracing step by step the career of the great Daniel, and listening to the 'pleasant voice' and 'lovely songs'[1] of the captive prophet on the banks of the Chebar, but we may not at present do so, and must return to the wreck of Judah. What words can describe the scene of desolation! Ruins everywhere—not picturesque, venerable ruins, half hidden by moss and ivy, and from whose crevices many a sweet-scented herb and flower send forth their fragrance, and round whose broken columns the creeper fondly twines, but bare, blackened heaps, among which the mourning Hebrew remnant dare not linger, for birds and beasts of prey have already claimed the holy city as their own, and break the awful silence that reigns around with their discordant voices. And, if we turn from shattered walls, what then? Unsightly mounts, bearing on summit, side, and

[1] Ezek. xxxiii. 32.

foot, all the sad tokens of fierce and bloody war; half-choked, putrid streams; gardens and vineyards trodden down; and forest glades laid bare—these are now thy country scenes, apostate, fallen Judah! But thou art not yet left utterly desolate. One of thy 'daughters,' sacred Mizpah, has been spared, and within her walls thy faithful guardian Gedaliah holds his little court, and thy chief mourner Jeremiah bewails thy fate. Mizpah (watch-tower) lay a little to the north-east of Jerusalem, not far from Ramah, and was at the first foundation of the monarchy the great sanctuary of Jehovah—the special resort of the people in times of difficulty and solemn deliberation. Here Samuel assembled the penitent Hebrews to offer to God the sacrifice of a broken and contrite spirit; and, while the people fasted, and prayed, and wept, the Philistines, taking advantage of their unarmed, defenceless condition, came up to fight against them, but 'the Lord thundered with a great thunder on that day upon the Philistines, and discomfited them; and they were smitten before Israel.'[1] Nearly two centuries later we read of Mizpah being fortified by Asa, king of Judah, against the incursions of Baasha, king of Israel. Three hundred years passed away after Asa was buried in the sepulchre of his fathers, and Baasha in beautiful Tirzah, and then Mizpah became again memorable in the chronicles of Judah as the scene of a diabolical

[1] 1 Sam. vii. 10.

act of treachery and blood-guiltiness. Jeremiah tells us that after Nebuzar-adan had given him permission to leave Ramah, he (Jeremiah) went 'unto Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, to Mizpah; and dwelt with him among the people that were left in the land.'[1] A short season of rest and peace followed, undisturbed even by any apprehensions for the future. The entire population of Mizpah consisted at that time, we believe, of the governor and his attendants and Chaldean guard, the young daughters of Zedekiah and their eunuchs, Jeremiah and his faithful secretary Baruch, and the families of such vine-dressers and husbandmen who were employed in the immediate neighbourhood. As Mizpah stood on higher ground than Jerusalem, on the broad ridge which forms the continuation of the Mount of Olives to the north and east, the ruins of the holy city might be visible, at least, from the governor's residence. No marvel, therefore, that the devoted and inspired patriot and poet Jeremiah, with the wreck of her he loved so passionately ever in view, lamented for Jerusalem in language unrivalled for touching pathos and beauty:—

'How solitary doth she sit, the many-peopled city!
She is become a widow, the great among the nations;
The queen among the provinces, how is she tributary!
Weeping—weeps she all the night; the tears are on her cheeks;

[1] Jer. xl. 6.

From among all her lovers she hath no comforter;
Her friends have all dealt treacherously; they are become her foes.'[1]

It is not known for a fact that the Lamentations of Jeremiah were written at Mizpah, but there is ground for supposing that they were the patriotic effusions of the author's burdened heart during the period of his brief respite from personal danger and suffering under the protection of Gedaliah. By turns, the prophet and the holy city, in these exquisite elegies, are introduced as pouring forth their sorrows, and in the end a chorus of the people send up the most plaintive and earnest supplications to God. 'We cannot admire too much (says Dr. Blayney) the full and graceful flow of pathetic eloquence in which the author pours forth the effusions of a patriotic heart, and piously weeps over the ruins of his venerable country. Never was there a more rich and elegant variety of beautiful images ranged together within so small a compass nor more happily chosen and applied. The prophet's peculiar talent lay in working up and expressing the passions of grief and pity, and unhappily for him, as a man and a citizen, he met with a subject but too well calculated to give his genius its full display.' Another critic[2] says, 'The power of entering into the spirit and meaning of poems such as these depends on two distinct

[1] Lam. i. 1, 2. Milman's translation.
[2] Bishop Harold Browne.

conditions. We must seek to see, as with our own eyes, the desolation, misery, and confusion which came before those of the prophet. We must endeavour, also, to feel as he felt when he looked upon them; and the last is the more difficult of the two. Jeremiah was not merely a patriot poet weeping over the ruin of his country, he was a prophet who had seen all this coming, and had foretold it as inevitable. He had urged submission to the Chaldeans as the only mode of diminishing the terrors of that day of the Lord. And now the Chaldeans were come, irritated by the perfidy and rebellion of the kings and princes of Judah, and the actual horrors that he saw surpassed, though he predicted them, all that he had been able to imagine. All feeling of exultation in which, as a mere prophet of evil, he might have indulged at the fulfilment of his forebodings, was swallowed up in deep, overwhelming sorrow. Yet sorrow not less than other emotions works on men according to their characters, and a man with Jeremiah's gifts of utterance could not sit down in the mere silence and stupor of a hopeless grief. He was compelled to give expression to that which was devouring his heart and the heart of his people. The act was a relief to him, it led him on to a calmer and serener state, and revived the faith and hope which had been nearly crushed out.' The Jews, to this day, read fasting on every anniversary of the destruction of Jerusalem, the sad and

sublime poem which has, for the last seventeen hundred years and more, been connected with a later devastation than that by the Chaldeans, and portions of it form part of the prayers of the pilgrim Jews, who meet at the 'place of wailing,' to mourn over the departed glory of their city.

We are led to suppose that Nebuzar-adan left only three Hebrews of rank in Mizpah, the royal princesses excepted, Gedaliah, Jeremiah, and Baruch. Strong were the ties of sympathy, affection, and patriotism, which united the gentle, prudent, trusting, and noble governor, the holy, dauntless, and devoted prophet, and the faithful, learned scribe; and ofttimes, doubtless, when the heat of the day was past, the three friends might have been seen on the ridge of Olivet bending their sad steps towards the ruins of the holy city, to lament over the wreck of their glorious Temple, and of their beloved, their beautiful Jerusalem, perhaps dearer to them than ever, as she lay in her utter desolation. After long years' turmoil of war, rebellion, tyranny, and confusion, we fain would dwell a little upon a scene of domestic peace, pious resignation, and hope, such as Mizpah, for a brief season, presented, subsequent to the departure of the Chaldean host from Palestine. We long to know more of the interesting princesses, the granddaughters of the good Josiah, how many there were, and their respective ages. They would be young, the eldest not past the years of girlhood,

the youngest possibly an infant; for their unhappy father was then but thirty-one years of age. Our sympathies are with the interesting sisters, bereft by a single stroke of parents and brothers, but scarcely a line is given us whereon to base a scene in which we could group 'the king's daughters' and Jeremiah, who would, we may be assured, watch over them with loving care. If the elder ones of the princesses were old enough, and probably they were, to understand their distressing position, though all in Mizpah were yet perhaps ignorant of the fate of Zedekiah and his sons, how would the holy prophet and priest condole with and comfort them, leading their bleeding hearts to the only true source from whence consolation could be drawn.

The short rule of Gedaliah was marked by energy, piety, fidelity, prudence, and most disinterested love for his unfortunate countrymen. He was deservedly popular, and 'all the Jews that were in Moab, and among the Ammonites, and in Edom, and that were in all the countries, heard that the king of Babylon had left a remnant of Judah, and that he had set over them Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan; even all the Jews returned out of all the places whither they were driven, and came to the land of Judah, to Gedaliah, unto Mizpah, and gathered wine and summer fruits very much.'[1] It was the month of August. The Jews who flocked to Mizpah placed

[1] Jer. xl. 11, 12.

themselves under the protection of the new governor, in whom they evidently had implicit confidence. But the vial of God's wrath against Palestine was not yet drained. The instrument used by the Almighty for the completion of the desolation of the land was a perfidious wretch of the name of Ishmael, one of royal blood, the son, according to tradition, of an Egyptian slave. It will be remembered that when Zedekiah and his family and 'men of war' were being pursued by the Chaldeans on the night Jerusalem was taken, some of the warriors succeeded in effecting their escape. They, doubtless, took refuge in the neighbouring states. They remained in their places of concealment till the Chaldean army had quitted Palestine; but when they heard who had been appointed governor of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar, and that under Gedaliah's mild and prudent sway there was every prospect of peace, security, and comfort, they came 'to Mizpah, even Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan and Jonathan the sons of Kareah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth, and the sons of Ephai the Netophathite, and Jezaniah the son of a Maachathite, they and their men. And Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, sware unto them and unto their men, saying, Fear not to serve the Chaldeans: dwell in the land, and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you. As for me, behold, I will dwell at Mizpah, to

serve the Chaldeans which will come unto us: but ye, gather ye wine, and summer fruits, and oil, and put them in your vessels, and dwell in your cities that ye have taken.'[1] The princes, it appears, received a warm welcome from Gedaliah, who assured them by oath of his protection. He advised them each to choose a city (alas! all the cities were desolated) and build houses on the old foundations, and live peaceably, paying tribute to the king of Babylon. With thoughtful care he recommended them to first employ their men in assisting to gather in the summer fruits: the days of harvest were long past, corn in the East being ripe for the sickle in the spring. The princes appeared willing to follow the directions of Gedaliah, and were all evidently but one grateful to him for his protection and disinterested kindness. They left Mizpah, and for a short time longer the peace of the little community there remained undisturbed, save by the alarming intelligence that Ishmael, the prince of royal blood, was plotting to assassinate the beloved governor. Jeremiah tells us that 'Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were in the fields, came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, and said unto him, Dost thou certainly know that Baalis the king of the Ammonites hath sent Ishmael the son of Nethaniah to slay thee? But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam believed them not. Then Johanan the son of

[1] Jer. xl. 8–10.

Kareah spake to Gedaliah in Mizpah secretly, saying, Let me go, I pray thee, and I will slay Ishmael, the son of Nethaniah, and no man shall know it: wherefore should he slay thee, that all the Jews which are gathered unto thee should be scattered, and the remnant in Judah perish? But Gedaliah the son of Ahikam said unto Johanan the son of Kareah, Thou shalt not do this thing: for thou speakest falsely of Ishmael.'[1] The guileless, noble-minded governor could not conceive it possible that any one could be guilty of such an act of villany, and with marked displeasure he refused to listen to what he considered base slander, and indignantly forbade the grateful, well-meaning, but too hasty Johanan to secure his safety by murdering Ishmael. Josephus says that Gedaliah declared that he would rather be slain himself than destroy upon mere suspicion a man who had placed himself under his protection. It is generally understood that Ishmael was not one of the princes who fled from Jerusalem with Zedekiah, but had previously escaped from the city during the siege, and had taken refuge in Ammon. Probably, as soon as he heard that Gedaliah was made governor of Judah, he conceived the idea of murdering him, and found a willing coadjutor in the treacherous Baalis, king of Ammon; for it appears from the Scripture narrative that he came direct from the court of Ammon to Mizpah with the design of

[1] Jer. xl. 13–16.

slaying Gedaliah, though he was not able at once to carry out his vile purpose. It is difficult to know what motive he could have had in the act of villany he contemplated. Not simply to ingratiate himself with the Ammonites, who hated the whole race of Israel, would he have committed a deed so atrocious, and at the same time so full of peril in its consequences to himself. Ambition could scarcely have been his motive, for he could not, surely, have deluded himself with the expectation that the indignant Nebuchadnezzar would suffer him to fill the place of his victim, or that his distressed countrymen would ever submit to be governed by the murderer of their wise, gentle, and deservedly beloved Gedaliah. We must, therefore, conclude that he was enraged at finding one not of the royal line appointed governor of the land which his ancestors had so long reigned over; and very possibly the faithful, pious Gedaliah might, in former times, unwittingly have offended the proud prince of royal blood, and now was an opportunity for the latter to be revenged. Ishmael has been truly described as a marvel of craft and villany. He, as we have read, presented himself with the other Judean princes at the little court of Gedaliah, to pay his respects and claim the protection of the new governor. He was received with every kindness, and listened to the wise suggestions and generous propositions of his host, who displayed his own *unambitious* spirit by advising the princes to select *each a* ruined city, rebuild it, and live in it as his

own, independent of him (Gedaliah); become, in fact, a petty sovereign, tributary, of course, to the King of Babylon. Ishmael acquiesced in all Gedaliah's proposals, and doubtless, with the rest of the princes, expressed his gratitude for the governor's kind consideration, and, without having excited any suspicions as regarded his sincerity, left Mizpah. How Johanan and the captain of the forces became acquainted with the plot we are not told; we only know that as soon as they were privy to it they hastened to Mizpah to warn the governor, with what result we have just read. Finding that all remonstrances were unheeded they left the city, but probably remained in the neighbourhood that they might render assistance in case of alarm. It was not long before terrible proof was given how necessary had been Johanan's warning, and how misplaced Gedaliah's confidence in the wretched Ishmael. The latter again appeared at the governor's residence, bringing with him ten friends, Ammonite princes we suppose they were. Without allowing any suspicions, if they existed, to interfere with his hospitality, Gedaliah welcomed his royal guests, and entertained them at his own table. Before the close of the feast, Ishmael and the ten men that were with him 'smote Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, with the sword, and slew him, whom the king of Babylon had made governor over the land. Ishmael also slew all the Jews that were with him, even with Gedaliah, at Mizpah, and the Chaldeans that were found

there, and the men of war.'[1] Josephus says that Gedaliah allowed himself to be overcome with wine; if so, we are persuaded that the wine was drugged, and that not only the governor and the Jews that were with him at table, but the Chaldean guard and other soldiers who were in attendance must have partaken of it, for so many victims must have been rendered by some means insensible before eleven men could have put them to death. The murderers having completed their bloody work in the governor's residence, descended into the town and secured Jeremiah, the king's daughters, their eunuchs, and Chaldean guard, the women and children of the vine-dressers and husbandmen, and, indeed, all the Jews who were in Mizpah.

Twice did the bright September sun rise upon Mizpah, and none beyond the walls of the city knew of the calamity which had befallen them. The tragedy enacted at Cawnpore, when, during the Indian mutiny in 1857, 200 of the wives and children of our brave officers were treacherously decoyed by Nana Sahib, and then slain in cold blood, and their bodies cast into a well, was but a repetition of the next act of the villain Ishmael. On the third day after the massacre Ishmael observed from his elevated position a company of men coming southward along the main road from Shechem and Samaria. They proved to be a band of devotees, who, with rent clothes, shaven beards,

[1] Jer. xli. 2, 3.

mutilated bodies, and other signs of grief, were on the way to Jerusalem, 'with offerings and incense in their hand, to bring them to the house of the Lord.'[1] Though the Temple was destroyed the site of it was still sacred, and among the ruins might have been already erected an altar on which to offer sacrifice, as was the case after the exiles returned from Babylon before the second Temple was built. It was Ishmael's intention, doubtless, to return to Ammon as soon as possible after the murder of Gedaliah, carrying with him his prisoners, and under the protection of Baalis escape the vengeance of the indignant Nebuchadnezzar and of the Jews, whose hopes he had so mercilessly wrecked. He was, therefore, alarmed when he saw the company of devotees approaching Mizpah. He perhaps naturally supposed that they would turn into the city to rest awhile and to pay their respects to the governor, and that they would, upon discovering the massacre, raise an alarm. The plans of the cunning Ishmael were soon laid, and ere the eighty pilgrims could reach Mizpah the vile hypocrite went forth 'to meet them, weeping all along as he went: and it came to pass, as he met them, he said unto them, Come to Gedaliah the son of Ahiham.'[2] The deceived pilgrims accepted the invitation, and followed their *weeping* guide, and, as they supposed, companion in grief, who led them straight to the governor's residence,

[1] Jer. xli. 5. [2] Ibid. 6.

which probably stood near the walls of the city, apart from the other habitations. How little the unsuspicious strangers knew the true meaning of the invitation, 'Come to Gedaliah;' and how little deemed they that they would all save ten share that night with the noble governor his last resting-place. No sooner had they entered the court-yard of Gedaliah's house than the gates were shut behind them, and Ishmael and his friends at once fell upon them. Unarmed and weary, seventy of them were soon despatched. 'But ten men were found among them that said unto Ishmael, Slay us not: for we have treasures in the field, of wheat, and of barley, and of oil, and of honey. So he forbare, and slew them not among their brethren. Now the pit wherein Ishmael had cast all the dead bodies of the men whom he had slain because of Gedaliah, was it which Asa the king had made for fear of Baasha king of Israel: and Ishmael the son of Nethaniah filled it with them that were slain.'[1] It is still customary in the East for people to bury corn and other provisions in deep pits and caverns, which are covered over with such skill that none but the depositors can find them out. To this day, in time of war, people often are, as were the ten pilgrims in Mizpah, spared on promising to make known their 'hidden stores in the fields.' We are expressly told that the pit Gedaliah and all the rest of Ishmael's victims were flung into was

[1] Jer. xli. 8, 9.

made by Asa 'for fear of Baasha, king of Israel.' This pit is supposed to have been a reservoir within the fortress capable of holding a great supply of water in case of a protracted siege. Ishmael, we presume, did not long remain in Mizpah after the massacre of the devotees. He collected his prisoners and spoil, 'and departed to go over to the Ammonites.'[1] He was not, however, permitted to fully carry out his designs. Johanan soon discovered the atrocities that had been perpetrated, for if no human voice had told of the deed of blood, the mass of putrefying corpses which filled the great pit in Mizpah must have tainted the air around, and drawn the people from the fields to the accursed spot. Pursuit of the murderers was of course not delayed, and they were overtaken as they, with their prisoners, were resting 'by the great waters that are in Gibeon. Now it came to pass that when all the people which were with Ishmael saw Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces that were with him, then they were glad.'[2] Ishmael with eight of his associates escaped to Ammon, and we hear no more of the miscreant band. Though immediate retribution by human hands did not overtake the assassins, as was the case with many of the perpetrators of the Cawnpore tragedy, we may be assured the avenging hand of the Lord fell upon them. We hear not of their individual doom, but the kingdom which sheltered

[1] Jer. xli. 10. [2] Ibid. 12, 13.

them was cursed by the Almighty. The word of the Lord came to Ezekiel, in Babylonia, condemning the Ammonites as a nation for their insolence and cruelty towards the fallen Hebrews, who, guilty as they were, were still the beloved children of Israel, the seed of faithful Abraham. In Rabbah, Ammon's royal city, the plot against Gedaliah was most probably concocted, and upon Rabbah especially did the Divine malediction fall, 'I will make Rabbah a stable for camels, and the Ammonites a couching place for flocks: and ye shall know that I am the Lord. For thus saith the Lord God, Because thou hast clapped thine hands, and stamped with the feet, and rejoiced in heart with all thy despite against the land of Israel; behold, therefore I will stretch out Mine hand upon thee, and will deliver thee for a spoil to the heathen; and I will cut thee off from the people, and I will cause thee to perish out of the countries: I will destroy thee; and thou shalt know that I am the Lord.'[1]

For ages and ages after her doom had been pronounced Rabbah stood among the mountains of Gilead, noted for her strength and wealth. Situated on the confines of the Syrian desert, and possessing among other advantages that inestimable treasure in the sultry East, a perennial stream, the 'city of waters,'[2] though suffering severely at times from the attacks of enemies, continued to flourish till the fourth century of the Christian era. The Chal-

[1] Ezek. xxv. 5-7. [2] 2 Sam. xii. 27.

dean, the Persian, the Egyptian, the Grecian, and the Roman standards floated in turn from her garrisoned towers, and then a Christian church graced the ancient city, and the hills around echoed the praises of the Redeemer. As the see of a bishop we last hear of Rabbah or Ammon (its more modern name). All is silent, solitary, and desolate now in the lovely vale, save that the flocks of the Bedouin shepherds couch among the ruins, and many a worn-out camel drags its weary limbs to the refreshing stream beside which it lies down to die. But not with the present lies our story, and though at every step we long to trace the history of each noted city from the hour her fate was proclaimed by prophet's lips down to our own day, and read the lesson her ruins or her site teaches us, the limits of our little work confine us to a certain period.

We left Jeremiah and the rest of the party near the great pool or lake of Gibeon. Very possibly neither the prophet nor any of Ishmael's prisoners had heard of the fate of Gedaliah till after their rescue by Johanan and the captains of the forces. Difficult would it be to conceive the state of agonizing suspense the imprisoned ones in Mizpah must have endured during the two or three awful, silent days which succeeded the terrible night of Gedaliah's feast and death. How would Jeremiah and Baruch, suspecting the worst, cry to the Lord for help! How would the young princesses weep, and

in terror cling to their no less terrified attendants! and how many aching eyes would be turned towards the governor's house, anxiously watching for his appearance to release them. Not long were the poor captives kept in inactive misery. They were hurried away, manacled doubtless, but not fettered. Ten or twelve miles of hill and dale were traversed, and then the wearied ones were permitted to rest. What a welcome sight it must have been to them that of the troop of armed warriors coming to their rescue—strength, courage, and hope revived, and no longer fearing their panic-stricken captors, they 'cast about and returned, and went unto Johanan the son of Kareah.'[1] After the flight of Ishmael and his band the whole company, no doubt hourly increasing in numbers, removed from Gibeon under the protection and guidance of Johanan, who assumed the command, 'And they departed and dwelt in the habitation of Chimham, which is by Bethlehem, to go to enter into Egypt.'[2] Fear lest Nebuchadnezzar should avenge himself upon them for the death of his pasha, took possession of them all but Jeremiah and Baruch. 'The habitation of Chimham' was probably an inn or khan, such as were common in the East for the accommodation of entire caravans. David, as an acknowledgment of the kindness he received from the aged Barzillai very probably gave Chimham, supposed to have been Barzillai's son, a

[1] Jer. xli. 14. [2] Ibid. 17.

possession of land near Bethlehem, which might, even till the invasion of the Chaldeans, have been in the possession of Chimham's family. Bewildered, terrified, and utterly broken down, yet not penitent, the poor deluded remnant still turned their longing eyes towards Egypt, notwithstanding her late treachery towards them. But they dare not move one way or the other, and at length resolved to be guided by the Lord, seeking His assistance through Jeremiah. Very touching in its sadness and humility was the appeal made to the prophet from the least even unto the greatest 'Let, we beseech thee, our supplication be acceptable before thee, and pray for us unto the Lord thy God, even for all this remnant; (for we are left but a few of many, as thine eyes do behold us:) that the Lord thy God may show us the way wherein we may walk, and the thing that we may do.'[1] Jeremiah laid the petition before the Lord. It was, however, ten days ere an answer was given. The command of the Almighty then was that they were not to go down into Egypt, but to remain in Judea. Death was to be the punishment if they disobeyed the Lord, but if they trusted in Him and remained in their own country, He would rebuild their cities and insure their safety. Oh, the love of God for the children of His faithful Abraham! As a father He pleaded that they would yield themselves up entirely to His care. 'Be not afraid (He said) of

[1] Jer. xlii. 2, 3.

the king of Babylon, of whom ye are afraid; be not afraid; for I am with you to save you, and to deliver you from his hand.'[1] Alas, after the ten days of waiting and suspense, rebellion and defiance were in the ascendant, and in spite of the message direct from Heaven, and all Jeremiah's arguments and threatenings, the wretched company were resolved to take refuge in the land of plenty, enjoy its luxuries, and worship its false gods. In vain Jeremiah reasoned and warned. Dauntless as ever, though he and Baruch stood alone among the mutinous and excited multitude, he declared the judgment of God upon them if they entered Egypt. 'Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel (he cried), As Mine anger and My fury hath been poured forth upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem; so shall My fury be poured forth upon you, when ye shall enter into Egypt: and ye shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach; and ye shall see this place no more.'[2] But he spoke to deaf ears, and nothing could rouse the doomed remnant to save themselves by submitting to the guidance of their Divine King. Finding that they were determined to go to Egypt, Jeremiah accused them of hypocrisy, 'Ye dissembled in your hearts (he said) when ye sent me unto the Lord your God, saying, Pray for us unto the Lord our God; and according unto all that the Lord our God shall say, so declare unto us, and

[1] *Jer.* xlii. 11. [2] Jer. xlii. 18.

we will do it. And now I have this day declared it unto you; but ye have not obeyed the voice of the Lord your God, nor anything for the which He hath sent me unto you. Now therefore know certainly that ye shall die by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence, in the place whither ye desire to go and to sojourn.'[1]

Greatly enraged at his denunciations, Azariah, and Johanan, and all the proud men accused Jeremiah of prophesying falsely; and against Baruch the old accusation of treachery in favour of the Chaldeans was raised. 'Thou speakest falsely' (they said): 'the Lord our God hath not sent thee to say, Go not into Egypt to sojourn there: but Baruch the son of Neriah setteth thee on against us, for to deliver us into the hand of the Chaldeans, that they might put us to death, and carry us away captives into Babylon. So Johanan the son of Kareah, and all the captains of the forces, took all the remnant of Judah that were returned from all nations, whither they had been driven, to dwell in the land of Judah; even men, and women, and children, and the king's daughters, and every person that Nebuzar-adan, the captain of the guard, had left with Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, and Jeremiah the prophet, and Baruch the son of Neriah. So they came into the land of Egypt: for they obeyed not the voice of the Lord: thus came they even to

[1] Jer. xlii. 20–22.

Tahpanhes.'[1] We do not know how long the fugitives remained near Bethlehem, but probably long enough to enable most of their countrymen who were scattered over Judah to join them; for all, as the tidings reached them of the massacre at Mizpah, were alarmed for the consequences to themselves of the murder of Gedaliah and the Chaldean guard, innocent as they were of having directly or indirectly taken any part in the atrocious deed. Terrible must have been the agony of mind Jeremiah endured when he found himself being carried into Egypt. Who can describe the grief of the patriot and martyr as he bade farewell, perhaps for ever, to his fatherland, his beloved Judæa? Death would have been welcome, if he could but have been permitted to breathe his last 'at home,' and be laid perchance in the sacred vale at the foot of Olivet. An elegy, can we doubt it, as pathetic as any that had been poured over ruined Jerusalem burst from the prophet's breaking heart, as the rounded hills and ruined cities of Judah faded from his sight.

> 'Weep ye not for him that is dead,
> Neither be sorry for him:
> Weep ye sorely for him that is gone away,
> For he shall return no more,
> Nor see his native land,'[2]

was his lamentation twenty years before, when his tender, sympathising spirit followed the young

[1] *Jer. xliii. 2–7.* [2] Ibid. xxii. 10. Blayney's translation.

king Jehoahaz (Shallum) to the same land of exile he was being hurried to. By force alone could Jeremiah and Baruch have been taken to Egypt; therefore as prisoners in the hands of their countrymen they arrived at the royal city Tahpanhes. Hither also were brought the daughters of Zedekiah, and from this time we lose all trace of the royal sisters. No allusion is again made to them in sacred history; but we may yet some day learn (if but by a hint), from the inscriptions on the ancient monuments of Egypt now being deciphered, the fate of the Judæan princesses in their exile home.

The Hebrews dispersed themselves over Egypt. Some settled in Tahpanhes, which was near Pelusium, at the very entrance of Egypt on the road to Judæa; others made Migdol their home—the Migdol mentioned by Moses as being not far from the Red Sea; others settled in Noph (Memphis), famed even then for her pyramids; and others took refuge in the country of Pathros, of which Thebes, the No of Scripture, was the capital. Vain hope of the apostate, rebellious children of God, that they could escape the avenging hand of their insulted Father, or hide themselves from His searching eye! By Pharaoh's gorgeous palace, on Migdol's reed-girt plain, in ancient Thebes' thronged streets, and by Noph's royal sculptured tombs, the voice of God's messenger was heard, proclaiming His awful sentence upon the faithless

Hebrews, upon the nation whose protection they had sought, and upon the false gods they impiously worshipped. As though he had buckled on his armour afresh when he entered upon the scene of his last recorded conflicts, Jeremiah, with zeal if possible more fervent than ever, and courage more indomitable, poured forth a volley of Divine denunciations upon the heads of God's enemies.

Very soon, if not immediately, after his arrival at Tahpanhes, he was ordered by the Almighty to take some great stones, and in the sight of the chief men of Judah hide them in the clay which was in the brick-kiln at the entrance of Pharaoh's house, and to say: 'Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will send and take Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will set his throne upon these stones that I have hid; and he shall spread his royal pavilion over them. And when he cometh, he shall smite the land of Egypt, and deliver such as are for death, to death; and such as are for the captivity, to captivity; and such as are for the sword, to the sword. And I will kindle a fire in the houses of the gods of Egypt; and he shall burn them, and carry them away captives: and he shall array himself with the land of Egypt, as a shepherd putteth on his garment; and he shall go forth from thence in peace. He shall break also the images of Beth-shemesh, that is in the land of Egypt; and

the house of the gods of the Egyptians shall he burn with fire.'[1] Bricks, in those hot countries, are in general only dried in the sun, not burnt as among us. There would, therefore, be many places for making bricks where there are no kilns; and such a place possibly the word here translated 'brick-kiln' signifies. Or the word (as Parkhurst suggests) probably means an area paved with brick or tile, a bricked area then being made within the precincts of the palace. It was customary, when a city was taken, for the conqueror to have a throne placed for him on some suitable spot within the walls. On this throne the triumphant monarch seated himself, and surrounded by all the splendour and magnificence of royal state, passed judgment upon the principal prisoners, rewarded his soldiers according (we presume) to the number of heads they laid at his feet, and issued his commands touching the sacking of the city. The throne, it should be mentioned, was always placed under a costly pavilion.

The headstrong Jews in Egypt not only refused to be directed by Jeremiah, but openly set the commands of God at defiance, and with more determination than ever followed their idolatrous inclinations. The favourite false deity of the Hebrew women was the Queen of Heaven (the Star of Heaven). This divinity is believed to have been the moon, and was worshipped under a

[1] Jer. xliii. 10–13.

variety of names: Isis, Ashtaroth, Astarte or Athor, Aphrodite, Cybele, &c. She was no new divinity among the Hebrews, as is seen by the reply of the men and women to Jeremiah when he delivered God's message of wrath to them. The Lord, in this message, reminded His rebellious children of all the misery their idolatries had brought upon Judah. How He had striven to recall them to a sense of their duty, sending to them His servants, the prophets, pleading with them even whilst they were insulting Him by offering incense to false gods. 'Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate.'[1] He had entreated, but in vain. He reminded them how through their refusal to obey Him, His fury had burst forth, and Judah and Jerusalem had been desolated. 'Have ye forgotten (He said) the wickedness of your fathers, and the wickedness of the kings of Judah, and the wickedness of their wives, and your own wickedness, and the wickedness of your wives, which they have committed in the land of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem? They are not humbled even unto this day, neither have they feared, nor walked in My law, nor in My statutes that I set before you, and before your fathers. Therefore, thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, Behold, I will set My face against you for evil, and to cut off all Judah. And I will take the remnant of Judah, that have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all

[1] Jer. xliv. 4.

be consumed, and fall in the land of Egypt; they shall even be consumed by the sword and by the famine: they shall die from the least even unto the greatest, by the sword and by the famine: and they shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach. For I will punish them that dwell in the land of Egypt, as I have punished Jerusalem, by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence: so that none of the remnant of Judah, which are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall escape or remain, that they should return into the land of Judah, to which they have a desire to return to dwell there: for none shall return but such as shall escape. Then all the men which knew that their wives had burned incense unto other gods, and all the women that stood by, a great multitude, even all the people that dwelt in the land of Egypt, in Pathros, answered Jeremiah, saying, As for the word that thou hast spoken unto us in the name of the Lord, we will not hearken unto thee. But we will certainly do whatsoever thing goeth forth out of our own mouth, to burn incense unto the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, as we have done, we, and our fathers, our kings, and our princes, in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem: for then had we plenty of victuals, and were well, and saw no evil. But since we left off to burn incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her, we have wanted

all things, and have been consumed by the sword, and by the famine. And when we burned incense to the queen of heaven, and poured out drink-offerings unto her, did we make her cakes to worship her, and pour out drink-offerings unto her, without our men? Then Jeremiah said unto all the people, to the men, and to the women, and to all the people which had given him that answer, saying, The incense that ye burned in the cities of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem, ye, and your fathers, your kings, and your princes, and the people of the land, did not the Lord remember them, and came it not into His mind? So that the Lord could no longer bear, because of the evil of your doings, and because of the abominations which ye have committed; therefore is your land a desolation, and an astonishment, and a curse, without an inhabitant, as at this day. Because ye have burned incense, and because ye have sinned against the Lord, and have not obeyed the voice of the Lord, nor walked in His law, nor in His statutes, nor in His testimonies; therefore this evil is happened unto you, as at this day. Moreover, Jeremiah said unto all the people, and to all the women, Hear the word of the Lord, all Judah that are in the land of Egypt: thus saith the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, saying, 'Ye and your wives have both spoken with your mouths, and fulfilled with your hand, saying, We will surely perform our vows that we have vowed, to burn

incense to the queen of heaven, and to pour out drink-offerings unto her: ye will surely accomplish your vows, and surely perform your vows. Therefore hear ye the word of the Lord, all Judah that dwell in the land of Egypt; Behold, I have sworn by My great name, saith the Lord, that My name shall no more be named in the mouth of any man of Judah in all the land of Egypt, saying, The Lord God liveth. Behold, I will watch over them for evil, and not for good: and all the men of Judah that are in the land of Egypt shall be consumed by the sword and by the famine, until there be an end of them. Yet a small number that escape the sword shall return out of the land of Egypt into the land of Judah, and all the remnant of Judah, that are gone into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, shall know whose words shall stand, Mine or theirs.'[1] This was the most awful malediction that had ever fallen upon the apostate, hardened Hebrews. It was limited mercifully to the headstrong remnant, who persisted, in spite of the threats, remonstrances, and persuasions of the Almighty, in fleeing to Egypt instead of remaining 'at home,' under the immediate protection (divinely assured) of the Most High, and in their fancied security, boldly defied the anger of the Lord. For their daring disobedience and impiety they were condemned to die in Egypt by the sword, by the famine, and by the pestilence; and not only so, but were doomed to perish

[1] Jer. xliv. 9–28.

in their sins. The hour of grace for them was past, repentance would never be vouchsafed to them, and in their dying agonies no cry to their once loving Father for mercy upon their wretched souls would be heard, for the Lord declared that His great name should never again pass their lips. The delivery of this last divine message was followed by a prophecy relating to the king of Egypt, the fulfilment of which was to be a sign to the condemned Hebrews, that the sentence pronounced against them would be surely executed. With this final prediction, we bid farewell to the great prophet Jeremiah. His last days are completely hidden from us. Tradition has attempted to supply the place of authentic narrative, but, as usual, contradicts herself. One tradition, believed generally by the early Christians, related both by St. Jerome and Dorotheus as a fact is, that Jeremiah was stoned to death in Egypt by his own renegade countrymen, for preaching against their idolatry. Another tradition is, that the Egyptians put him to death for prophesying against them and their king, Pharaoh-Hophra; but according to the same tradition, the Egyptians esteemed Jeremiah very highly because he had, by his prayers, freed them from crocodiles, and they held the prophet in such honour that they buried him in one of their royal sepulchres. The huge reptile, though worshipped in some parts of Egypt, was, in others which it ravaged, regarded with the greatest terror by the

inhabitants. The first tradition is not at all an improbable one, for the holy martyr (a martyr truly he was all his life) we know was exposed continually to the persecutions of his fellow-countrymen, whose irregularities and apostasy he was always reproving. The Jews, however, state and firmly believe that on the conquest of Egypt by Nebuchadnezzar, Jeremiah went to Babylon, his constant friend Baruch accompanying him, and died in peace there; but there is, we should think, no foundation for this tradition, for in all probability the aged martyr was safely sheltered in the heavenly Jerusalem long before the Chaldeans entered Egypt, which they did, as is supposed, about sixteen or eighteen years after the murder of Gedaliah. The Alexandrian Greek translators ascribe the hundred and thirty-seventh psalm to Jeremiah, but if the inspired patriot wrote it, it does not prove that he was ever a captive in Babylon. The psalm may have been altogether prophetical, or in his deep sympathy with his exiled brethren the scene he so vividly describes may have forced itself upon his imagination and have drawn from him the exquisite lamentation :

'By Babel's rivers there we sate us down,
Yea, in remembering Zion, did we weep,
And hanged our harps upon the willows there—
For there our captors asked the words of song,
And our destroyers there required mirth ;
Saying, " Sing us of the songs of Zion now !"
How shall we sing to you Jehovah's song?

How in the land of strangers can we sing?
If I forget thee, O Jerusalem!
Let my right hand forget her native skill!
And let my tongue cleave silent to my mouth,
If I do not remember thee, and deem
Jerusalem to be my chiefest joy.
Remember, Lord, the words of Edom's sons,
Who, in the days of lost Jerusalem,
Cried, "Raze her, down to the foundation-stone!"
Daughter of Babel! who shall be destroyed,
Blessed be he who wreaks thy deed on thee
Which thou hast done to us! Yea, Edom blest!
Who throws thy little ones against thy rock!'[1]

Babylon being built on, and of clay, far from any rocks, cannot well be referred to in the last sentence—it probably refers to Edom, which was built in, and of, craggy rocks. The parallelism of Hebrew poetry renders this likely. The Edomites, the children of Esau, with their hatred to the children of Jacob (Israel), seized every opportunity of wreaking their vengeance upon their rival brethren. So intense was the hatred of Edom for his 'brother,' that they are, as we have just quoted in the 137th psalm, represented as not merely taking part with the Babylonians in Jerusalem's last catastrophe, but even as urging the cruel conquerors to complete the work of destruction. And more still, as the Lord tells us by Obadiah, watching along the byways to cut off the poor fugitives who fled from the Chaldeans to seek an asylum in other lands: 'For thy violence against thy brother Jacob shame

[1] Psa. cxxxvii. Mrs. Petrie's translation.

shall cover thee, and thou shalt be cut off for ever. In the day that thou stoodest on the other side, in the day that the strangers carried away captive his forces, and foreigners entered into his gates, and cast lots upon Jerusalem, even thou wast as one of them. But thou shouldest not have looked on the day of thy brother in the day that he became a stranger; neither shouldest thou have rejoiced over the children of Judah in the day of their destruction; neither shouldest thou have spoken proudly in the day of distress. Thou shouldest not have entered into the gate of My people in the day of their calamity; yea, thou shouldest not have looked on their affliction in the day of their calamity, nor have laid hands on their substance in the day of their calamity; neither shouldest thou have stood in the crossway, to cut off those of his that did escape; neither shouldest thou have delivered up those of his that did remain in the day of distress. For the day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head.'[1]

Very shortly after Jeremiah had closed his prophetical career we lose sight of his contemporary, the third great prophet, Ezekiel, whose last days, like those of Jeremiah, have been hidden from us. Scripture is silent on the subject, and tradition is uncertain. St. Jerome, in his life of Ezekiel, tells

[1] Obad. 10–15.

us that the prophet was put to death by a prince of the house of Judah, whom he had reproved for his idolatry, but in what part of Babylonia we are not informed. Benjamin of Tudela, in his travels, tells that at some leagues from Bagdad he saw a magnificent mausoleum which was said to be Ezekiel's tomb, upon the top of which there was a famous library, wherein, as they say, was the original of the prophet's predictions, written with his own hand; that in the tomb there was a lamp continually burning, maintained at the expense of the Jews of Bagdad; that every year the tomb is frequented by the several heads of the captivity who resort thither with a numerous retinue, and that not only the Jews, but the Persians, Medes, and many of the Mussulmen, made this a place of devotion and to perform their most sacred vows.

The limits of our little work forbid us dwelling at length upon the character and writings of the holy Jeremiah, whose sad pilgrimage we are permitted to trace step by step during a period of at least twenty-two years, dating from the death of Josiah (which event took place eighteen years after he had received his call), when he first appears as taking part in, or rather exercising an important influence upon the public policy of his country. Heavy, indeed, was the burden he was ordained to carry from youth to old age. As a prophet of evil he was commissioned by God to appear among his *countrymen*, to whom he was passionately attached.

Whatever glorious promises of salvation it had fallen to the lot of Isaiah to deliver, the great burden of the strains of Jeremiah's plaintive lyre was misery, and lamentation, and woe. Gentle, sympathetic, tender-hearted, full of the most devoted patriotism, keenly alive to injustice and misconstruction, he was, because he urged upon his fellow-citizens submission to the Chaldeans, charged with treachery, and was persecuted as an enemy to the country he would willingly have died to save. No marvel that his writings are impressed with a deep and lasting melancholy, and that in the bitterness of his soul he occasionally gave vent to his grief in expressions hardly consistent with his religious principles and his near intercourse with the Almighty, but which, when duly weighed, demand our pity for his unmerited sufferings rather than our censure for any want of piety and reverence towards God. The mental agony must, indeed, have been fearful which drew from the sufferer's lips lamentations such as appear at intervals in his prophecies. Hated, shunned, and persecuted on account of the mission he bore, and which he, with undaunted courage and the most conscientious integrity fulfilled, his own personal trials were sufficient to crush his tender spirit; but in addition to these he ever carried with him the weight of his country's woes, and mourned her decline and fall with passionate grief:—

'Woe is me, my mother,
That thou hast borne me a man of strife,
And a man of contention to the whole earth!
I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent on usury to me;
Yet every one of them doth curse me.'

'Cursed be the man who brought the news to my father,
Saying, There is a male child born unto thee;
Making him exceedingly glad.'[2]

'Oh, that my head were waters,
And mine eyes a fountain of tears,
That I might weep day and night
For the slain of the daughter of my people,'[3]

he exclaimed when his enemies traduced him and sought his life. And whilst he thus bewails his own sad lot, he laments the miseries and desolation of his country in strains so pathetic, beautiful, and sublime, that they could only be the effusions of a breaking heart. But he was saved from utter despair. In the midst of his sufferings he had ever in view the vision of Israel's restoration. Clear and bright it shone, piercing through the darkness and confusion which reigned around him. Precious boon to his patriotic heart must have been such a promise as this:—

'Thus saith Jehovah:
Behold, I will reverse the captivity of Jacob's tents,
And upon his dwelling-places will I have compassion;
And the city shall be builded upon its heap,
And the palace shall be re-established upon its former plan.

[1] Jer. xv. 10. [2] Ibid. xx. 15. Blayney's translation.
[3] Ibid. ix. 1. Blayney's translation.

And out of them shall go forth thanksgiving,
And the voice of them that are joyous;
And I will multiply them, and they shall not be diminished,
And I will raise them to honour, and they shall not be brought low.
And his children shall be as aforetime,
And his congregation shall be established before Me;
And I will call to account those that oppress him,
And his prince shall be of his own race,
And his governor shall go forth out of the midst of him;
And I will draw him, that he may come near unto Me;
For who is he that hath set his heart
To draw near unto Me? saith Jehovah.
And ye shall be unto Me a people,
And I will be unto you a God.'[1]

Beyond the return of the captive Hebrews and their establishment in their own land, the vision of the future was extended, and Jeremiah foretold the miraculous birth and divinity of Christ with such clearness that he is regarded almost as fully as Isaiah as a prophet of the Gospel. His life was a type of that of the Saviour. He was 'a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief,'[2] in consequence of the sins of his brethren and their coming punishment. 'In all their afflictions he was afflicted,'[3] and of him his countrymen might truly have said, 'He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.'[4] 'I am the man that hath seen affliction by the rod of His wrath,'[5] says the prophet of him-

[1] Jer. xxx. 18–22. Blayney's translation. [2] Isa. liii. 3.
[3] Ibid. 9. [4] Ibid. 4. [5] Lam. iii. 1.

self and of Christ. 'I was (he says) like a lamb or an ox that is brought to the slaughter; I knew not that they had devised devices against me, saying, Let us destroy the tree with the fruit thereof, and let us cut him off from the land of the living.'[1] This was said by the prophet of the men of Anathoth, his own native place, who were seeking his life; and so it was the men of Nazareth, His own city, who first attempted the life of our Lord. 'Jeremiah, it has been remarked, is the Christian's study, as therein he studies his Master's own life and the mind which was in Christ. To look on the prophets only as foretelling things to come, is but a partial and limited mode of taking them; nor are they only as preachers of righteousness, but likewise real living characters in which Christ Himself is speaking by His Spirit. Where Christ is, there must His servants behold Him.'[2]

With regard to the style of Jeremiah, Horne remarks, 'Though the sentiments of this prophet are not always the most elevated, nor his periods uniformly neat and compact, yet his style is in a high degree beautiful and tender, especially when he has occasion to excite the softer passions of grief and pity, which is frequently the case in the earlier parts of his prophecies. These are chiefly poetical. The middle of his book is almost entirely historical, and is written in a plain, prosaic style, suitable to historical narrative. On many occa-

[1] *Jer.* xi. 19. [2] Williams.

sions he is very elegant and sublime, especially from the forty-sixth chapter to the fifty-ninth verse of the fifty-first chapter. These prophecies are wholly poetical, and in them Jeremiah approaches very near the sublimity of Isaiah.' His Lamentations, as we have already remarked, are unrivalled for touching pathos and beauty. 'That the subject of these elegies is the destruction of the holy city and Temple, the overthrow of the State, the extermination of the people—and that these events are described as actually accomplished, and not in the style of prediction merely—must be evident to every reader, though some authors of considerable reputation have imagined this poem to have been composed on the death of king Josiah. The prophet, indeed, has so copiously, so tenderly, and poetically, bewailed the misfortune of his country, that he seems completely to have fulfilled the office and duty of a mourner. In my opinion there is not extant any poem which displays such a happy and splendid selection of imagery in so concentrated a state. What can be more elegant and poetical than the description of that once flourishing city, lately chief among the nations, sitting in the character of a female, solitary, afflicted, in a state of widowhood, deserted by her friends, betrayed by her dearest connexions, imploring relief, and seeking consolation in vain? What a beautiful personification is that of "the ways of Zion, mourning because none are come to her solemn

feast!"[1] How tender and pathetic are the following complaints:—

"Is this nothing to all you who pass along this way? Behold and see,
If there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow, which is inflicted on me;
Which Jehovah inflicted on me in the day of the violence of His wrath.
For these things I weep, my eyes stream with water;
Because the comforter is far away, that should tranquillise my soul;
My children are desolate, because the enemy was strong."[2]

But to detail its beauties would be to transcribe the entire poem.'[3]

[1] Lam. i. 4. [2] Ibid. 12–16. [3] Lowth.

CHAPTER VII.

OUR few remaining pages must be devoted chiefly to the public affairs of Egypt during the sojourn of the Hebrew remnant there, and to the movements of the Chaldean army after its departure from Palestine. Pharaoh-Hophra, it will be remembered, after encouraging Zedekiah to rebel against his powerful lord, Nebuchadnezzar, and promising his assistance as an ally, basely deserted the Judean king in his extremity, and left Jerusalem to defend herself as best she could against the rage of her merciless enemies the Chaldeans. This act of treachery brought down upon the head of Hophra the vengeance of the God of Israel, and both Ezekiel and Jeremiah were commissioned to pronounce judgment upon him. The former designates him the 'great dragon' (crocodile). Bochart says that Pharaoh in Arabic means crocodile. 'Behold (said the Lord) I am against thee, Pharaoh king of Egypt, the great dragon that lieth in the midst of his rivers, which hath said, My river is mine own, and I have

made it for myself. But I will put hooks in thy jaws, and I will cause the fish of thy rivers to stick unto thy scales; and I will bring thee up out of the midst of thy rivers, and all the fish of thy rivers shall stick unto thy scales. And I will leave thee thrown into the wilderness, thee and all the fish of thy rivers: thou shalt fall upon the open fields; thou shalt not be brought together, nor gathered: I have given thee for meat to the beasts of the field, and to the fowls of the heaven. And all the inhabitants of Egypt shall know that I am the Lord, because they have been a staff of reed to the house of Israel.'[1] Herodotus tells us that Pharaoh-Hophra, or Apries, as this Egyptian king is called in profane history, proudly and impiously boasted that he had established his kingdom so surely that it was not in the power of any god to dispossess him of it. The sentence Jeremiah was commissioned by God to pronounce upon the 'great dragon' was this: 'Behold, I will give Pharaoh-Hophra king of Egypt into the hand of his enemies, and into the hand of them that seek his life; as I gave Zedekiah king of Judah into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, his enemy, and that sought his life.'[2] Very soon after his cowardly and dishonourable retreat from the Chaldean army in Judah, the curse upon Hophra began to work. The Cyrenians, a colony of Greeks that had settled in Africa, having taken from the Libyans a great

[1] *Ezek.* xxix. 3–6. [2] Jer. xliv. 30.

part of their land, and divided it amongst themselves, the Libyans made a surrender both of themselves and their country into the hands of Hophra, or Apries, to obtain his protection. Consequently, Apries sent a great host into Libya to wage war against the Cyrenians, but his army was overthrown in battle, and almost the whole of it destroyed. This caused such dissatisfaction among the subjects of Apries, who considered that he had sacrificed his soldiers in an unnecessary war, that many of them revolted. The king sent his prime minister Amasis to the rebels to endeavour to pacify them. Whilst Amasis was haranguing the conspirators, they brought a crown and other ensigns of royalty, and forcing them upon him, proclaimed him king. Upon being informed of this, Apries, greatly enraged, despatched another of his great officers of state, named Patarbemis, with orders to take Amasis and bring him alive before him. Patarbemis, however, found the rebels in such force, that it was vain to attempt to execute the king's command, and he returned to his royal master without his prisoner. The king was so enraged at the unfortunate nobleman for not having obeyed his orders, that he cut off his nose and ears. This act of cruelty and injustice incensed the Egyptians, who had hitherto continued faithful to Apries, to such a degree, that to a man they joined the conspirators, and the revolt became general. Both parties now prepared

for war, Amasis having under his command the whole body of native Egyptians, and Apries only those foreign mercenaries whom he could engage in his service. But the proud and arrogant Apries doubted not of success, believing (as it has been before stated) that it was not in the power even of any god to deprive him of his kingdom. A bloody engagement took place near Noph, in which the army of Apries, consisting of 30,000 men, was completely routed, and the king himself taken prisoner. Amasis now ascended the throne without opposition. He confined Apries in one of his palaces, but treated him, it is said, with great care and respect. Bishop Newton is of opinion that the following passage in Isaiah was a prediction of this civil war:—

'Behold, Jehovah rideth
On a swift cloud, and cometh to Egypt!
And the idols of Egypt shall be moved at His presence;
And the heart of Egypt shall melt in the midst of her.
And I will excite Egyptians against Egyptians,
And they shall fight, every man against his brother, and every man against his neighbour:
City against city, kingdom against kingdom.
And the spirit of Egypt shall fail in the midst of her;
And I will swallow up her counsel:
And they shall seek to the idols, and to the sorcerers,
And to the necromancers, and to the wizards,
And I will give up Egypt bound into the hands of cruel lords,
And a fierce king shall rule over them;
Saith the Lord Jehovah, God of Hosts.'[1]

[1] Isa. xix. 1-4. Lowth's translation.

Some commentators however (and we are inclined to their view) regard the passage as a prediction of the intestine strife which raged in Egypt about the year 700 B.C., when the kingdom was divided into twelve parts, over which as many of the chief nobility presided. This state of affairs lasted only fifteen years, when Psammeticus, one of the twelve princes, dethroned all the rest and became king of Egypt. He was the father of Pharaoh-Necho, whose march across Palestine proved so disastrous to Judah.

In the meantime, while Egypt was being weakened by internal commotions, and the Hebrews who had taken refuge in her were openly defying their Almighty King, Nebuchadnezzar was engaged in carrying out his ambitious schemes, still ignorant that he was a chosen servant of the Most High, or that his armies were under the command of the Omnipotent Lord of Hosts, who directed their every movement. Jerusalem, the princess among the provinces, had fallen, and the doom of Tyre, queen of the ocean, was pronounced. Although, when Jerusalem was destroyed, Nebuchadnezzar had taken important steps against Tyre, we infer, from a passage in Ezekiel, that she was not then in a state of siege, for she is represented as rejoicing over the fall of the holy city, and thereby exciting the wrath of God against her, 'Because that Tyrus hath said against Jerusalem, Aha, she is *broken* that was the gates of the people: she is

turned unto me; I shall be replenished, now she is laid waste. Therefore, thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God: and it shall become a spoil to the nations. And her daughters which are in the field shall be slain by the sword; and they shall know that I am the Lord.'[1] Not only for her insolence, but for her arrogance and pride was Tyre doomed to suffer:—

'Is this your triumphant city; whose antiquity is of the earliest date?
Her own feet bear her far away to sojourn.
Who hath purposed this against Tyre, who dispensed crowns;
Whose merchants were princes; whose traders were nobles of the land?
Jehovah God of Hosts hath counselled it;
To stain the pride of all beauty;
To make contemptible all the nobles of the earth.
Overflow thy land, like a river,
O daughter of Tarshish, the mound (that kept in thy waters) is no more.
He hath stretched His hand over the sea; He hath shaken the kingdoms:
Jehovah hath issued a command concerning Canaan, that they should destroy her strong places.

[1] Ezek. xxvi. 1–6.

And he hath said : Thou shalt triumph no more,
O thou dishonoured virgin, the daughter of Sidon !
To Chittim arise, pass over ; even there thou shalt have no rest.
Behold the land of the Chaldeans ;
This people was of no account :
The Assyrian founded it for the inhabitants of the desert ;
They raised the watch-towers, they set up the palaces thereof :
This people hath reduced her to a ruin.'[1]

More than a century passed away after this judgment by Isaiah was pronounced. Tyre still remained a joyous city, and her merchants princes, and she excelled even her illustrious mother Sidon in beauty, splendour, and riches. But the Chaldeans, her destined destroyers, who were, when the great Isaiah lived, a comparatively insignificant nation, quite beneath the notice of proud Tyre, had now risen to pre-eminence, and their capital had become the 'lady of kingdoms,'[2] and a most formidable rival. When her hour was come, the servant of the Lord appeared against Tyre. He of whom Jehovah spake by the mouth of Ezekiel, 'Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, a king of kings, from the north, with horses, and with chariots, and with horsemen, and companies, and much people.'[3] But Tyre trembled not for her safety. Was she not defended by walls that had proved too strong for the mighty Shalmanezer in his five years' siege? Did

[1] Isa. xxiii. 7–13. Lowth's translation.
[2] Ibid. xlvii. 5. [3] Ezek. xxvi. 7.

she not command the great ocean; for who could cope with her fleet, and cut off her supplies? Nay, more, her king Ethbaal or Ithobal, was not he a god, and his sovereignty over the seas unbounded? The irony with which Ezekiel in his twenty-eighth chapter addresses this proud, impious prince is very striking. For thirteen years the siege continued, but the end came at last. Gradually must the truth have forced itself upon the too self-confident city, that she who had never before succumbed to an enemy, must now yield to the irresistible Nebuchadnezzar. First her 'daughters in the field,'[1] the lesser towns which were under her jurisdiction, were destroyed. Then the terrible mounts approached her walls, and with battering-ram, battle-axe, and hammer, her towers were broken down, and then her ponderous gates gave way, and the Chaldeans entered Tyre. In they poured, a multitude of warriors with their horses and chariots, so vast a host that the splendid city was covered with the dust the cavalry raised, and her walls shook 'at the noise of the horsemen and of the wheels.'[2] Now would the Chaldean soldiers look for the reward of their thirteen years' service before Tyre. But they were grievously disappointed; for when the Tyrians saw that the works for carrying on the siege were perfected, and the foundations of the walls were shaken by the battering of the rams, whatever precious things in gold, silver, clothes, and various kinds of

[1] Ezek. xxvi. 8. [2] Ibid. 10.

furniture the nobility had, they put them on board their ships, and carried them to the islands, so that the city being taken, Nebuchadnezzar found nothing worthy of his labour. Even the *divine* Ithobal, who had said that his throne was inacessible to mortals, had thought it more prudent to descend from his celestial seat and escape in his royal galley with her benches of ivory, her sails of 'fine linen with broidered work from Egypt,'[1] and her awnings of blue and purple cloth. Great as may readily be believed was the disappointment of Nebuchadnezzar, upon finding that after the enormous expense and labour of so long a siege he had only taken a city which had been stripped of every article of value; and but little consolation was it to him that his soldiers vented their rage and chagrin upon the miserable Tyrians who were left in the city by massacring them indiscriminately.

It was just sixteen years after the Almighty had pronounced judgment against Tyre for her cruel, insolent, and selfish triumph over fallen Jerusalem, that the word of the Lord came again to Ezekiel, 'saying, Son of man, Nebuchadrezzar caused his army to serve a great service against Tyrus: every head was made bald, and every shoulder was peeled: yet had he no wages, nor his army, for Tyrus, for the service that he had served against it. Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will give the land of Egypt unto

[1] Ezek. xxvii. 7.

Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon; and he shall take her multitude, and take her spoil, and take her prey; and it shall be the wages for his army. I have given him the land of Egypt for his labour wherewith he served against it, because they wrought for Me, saith the Lord God.'[1] Some idea may be formed of the hardships the Chaldean soldiers endured during the thirteen years' continued campaign from the fact that every head was made bald by the helmet, by disease, and by labour, and every shoulder galled by carrying earth, timber, etc., to raise mounts and fortifications against the city.

After completely subduing the Phœnicians, the Babylonians carried their arms into Egypt, there to receive the reward of their long service against Tyre; but before following the great Assyrian host southward, we would trace to its completion the remarkable fulfilment of prophecy in the case of the once joyous queen of the ocean.

By Tyre, is generally understood old Tyre and insular Tyre. The latter was the Tyrian colony, the former on the mainland, the Tyrian seat of government. The two were united by a causeway or bridge. The Tyrian state, therefore, consisted of a city and small territory on the mainland, and a port or maritime city on the island. Unless this be borne in mind, and that the predictions of Isaiah and other prophets relate to both old and insular Tyre, it is difficult to understand many

[1] Ezek. xxix. 17–20.

passages in the prophecies. We have seen that old Tyre was taken and destroyed by the Chaldeans, as Isaiah had foretold, and particularly by Nebuchadnezzar, as Ezekiel had predicted, and also how her principal inhabitants sailed away from her when they found she could no longer resist the enemy as Isaiah had prophesied:—

'O thou dishonoured virgin, the daughter of Sidon!
To Chittim arise, pass over.'

The Tyrians having planted colonies upon the coasts of Chittim (Cyprus), Spain, and other parts, it was natural for them when compelled to flee from their own city to take refuge among their friends at a distance. Fortunate was that colony in which the *divine* and jewel-bedizened refugee Ithobal set up his *celestial* throne, which, we presume, he carried with him. Proud, impious Ithobal, what said the Lord,—

'Even there thou shalt have no rest.'

From ancient history we learn that Nebuchadnezzar, after subduing Phœnicia, Ammon, Moab, and Egypt, carried his arms farther westward. In doing so he probably pursued the Tyrians from one country to another, so that they literally found no rest.

Isaiah prophesied that Tyre should be forgotten seventy years, and should then be restored and regain all her former maritime power; and, more than all, he implies that she should ultimately be-

come a convert to the true religion. It was of insular Tyre the prophet spoke. Old Tyre was for ever dead. 'They shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea: for I have spoken it, saith the Lord God: and it shall become a spoil to the nations.'[1] 'I will make thee a terror, and thou shalt be no more: though thou be sought for, yet shalt thou never be found again, saith the Lord God.'[2] So spake the Lord of old Tyre by the mouth of Ezekiel. All has been fulfilled. For two centuries the wreck of old Tyre lay as the Chaldeans left it, but in the meantime the Tyrians had fortified themselves in their island city, had become again merchant-princes, and had assumed all their former arrogance and pride. 'And Tyrus did build herself a stronghold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets.'[3] Babylon had run her appointed course and had given place to Persia, who, in her turn, was called upon to yield to Macedon. The 'he-goat' Daniel saw in his vision on the banks of the Ulai, Alexander the Great, bent upon conquering the world, crossed the Hellespont, and bore down all before him. All Western Asia submitted to him without resistance, excepting Tyre and Gaza. The Queen of the Ocean deemed herself impregnable, and on her

[1] Ezek. xxvi. 4, 5. [2] Ibid. 21. [3] Zech. ix. 3.

sea-girt throne defied the proud and insatiable Macedonian king. The island on which Tyre was built was half-a-mile from the mainland, and the city was completely surrounded by stupendous walls, reaching in some parts on the side nearest the mainland to the height of one hundred and fifty feet. No marvel that she felt secure, for her enemy had no fleet wherewith to harass her. But Alexander overcame the difficulty by making an enormous causeway or mole from the mainland to the island. Historians tell us that he could not have accomplished this great work if Tyre had not been at the time blockaded on the north and on the south by the Cyprians and the Phœnicians, who had rebelled against Darius, king of Persia, to whom they were tributary, whilst Tyre had remained true to her allegiance with Persia. But whatever historians may say, we know that if Tyre's harbours had been free the Tyrians could not have successfully frustrated the designs of Alexander, for in the construction of the great causeway he unwittingly fulfilled, to the letter, the prediction of Ezekiel. The presence of the ruins of old Tyre probably suggested to Alexander the feasibility of making a breakwater or mole to connect the island with the mainland. He accomplished the gigantic task, and a causeway two hundred feet broad was made, over which his troops marched and laid siege to the city. In constructing this causeway, which may still be seen, old Tyre was literally removed

into the sea, not a vestige of her was left; even her very dust was scraped up and carried to its allotted place, there to lie a witness to this day of the truth of God's word. Old Tyre has, indeed, utterly disappeared, and travellers search in vain for a trace of it.

After a desperate resistance, in which eight thousand Tyrians were slain, insular Tyre fell into the hands of Alexander, who was so exasperated at the trouble her obstinacy had given him, that he ordered two thousand Tyrians to be crucified, and sold thirty thousand captives as slaves, again unconsciously fulfilling the word of the Lord. It was customary for the neighbouring nations of Palestine to traffic with the flesh and blood of the children of Israel, buying and selling them as slaves. Tyre and Sidon rendered themselves particularly obnoxious to the Lord by this disgraceful trade, and He declared He would deal with them accordingly. 'Yea, and what have ye to do with Me, O Tyre, and Zidon, and all the coasts of Palestine? will ye render Me a recompence? and if ye recompense Me, swiftly and speedily will I return your recompence upon your own head; because ye have taken My silver and My gold, and have carried into your temples My goodly pleasant things: the children also of Judah, and the children of Jerusalem, have ye sold unto the Grecians, that ye might remove them far from their border. Behold, I will raise them out of the place whither ye have

sold them, and will return your recompence upo
your own head: and I will sell your sons and you
daughters into the hand of the children of Judah
and they shall sell them to the Sabeans, to a pe
ple far off: for the Lord hath spoken it.'[1] In thi
passage the Grecians are, for the first time, mer
tioned in the Bible. It seems that they and th
Hebrews came first in contact in the slave-marke
of Tyre. It is supposed that Alexander, favourin
the Jews, set many Hebrew captives at liberty, whc
in their turn, may have purchased Tyrian prisoner
from the great conqueror, and sold them to th
Sabeans, the inhabitants of Sheba.

Alexander could not leave Tyre till he ha
executed his mission, so he set the city on fir
and thus was fulfilled the word of the Lorc
spoken by Zechariah, 'Behold, the Lord will cas
her out, and He will smite her power in the sea
and she shall be devoured with fire.'[2] Tyre aros
from her ashes, but her maritime glory was gon
for ever. Alexander, after subduing Egypt, buil
Alexandria, which became as Tyre had been, th
emporium of the world. Still Tyre carried on a
extensive trade in the dye of crimson and purpl
colours, and up to the time of the Crusaders wa
described as a very beautiful city. What says th
traveller of our day? 'At a short distance w
struck upon the broad sandy isthmus which tim
and tempest has heaped over the stone causewa

[1] Joel, iii. 4–8. [2] Zech. ix. 4.

made by Alexander, when he levelled the glory of Tyre in the dust, and hurled her towers into the midst of the sea. At the end of the causeway is the wall encircling the modern town; the blood-red flag with the white crescent hung idly from its staff, and a couple of sentinels in the costume of the Egyptian army kept watch at the unfrequented portal. Passing through this we entered the small, mean town which occupies an angle of the original site, and made our way to the remains of the past. The sea broke against a few ruinous fragments of walls, upon which, in literal fulfilment of Ezekiel's prophecy, fishermen had found "a place for the spreading of nets," while one or two of their small barks lay within at anchor. We took a boat and rowed out a short distance to obtain a view of the island, which is of small extent and presents to seaward a rugged line of rocks. The mouldering ruins of the cathedral, built in the middle ages, and the few buildings of the modern town, sprinkle over the desolate site. In the distance towers the range of Lebanon, and to the south of it the isolated snow-crowned summit of Mount Hermon. A boat full of fishermen were plying their occupation, and one or two ships of small burden lay at anchor off the port, sole representatives of the ancient glories of this world-renowned emporium.'[1]

Ezekiel, in his lamentation upon Tyre, gives us a very curious and interesting epitome of the trade of

[1] Bartlett.

the Queen of the Ocean, affording us an insight into the wealth and commerce of ancient times. Among the articles Tyre traded in were cedar from Lebanon; cypress from Hermon; oak from Bashan; ivory from Greece; embroidered linen and cloth from Egypt; iron, tin, lead, and silver from Tarshish (in the south of Spain) and other western ports (the tin was probably from Great Britain); horses and mules from Armenia; horns (probably the long horns of the ibex, a kind of goat, which were formed into cups, &c.), ebony, ivory, and rich cloths for the decoration of horses and chariots from Persia; emeralds, pearls, coral, and agate from Syria; the finest wheat, millet, oil, honey, and balsam from Judah; lambs, rams, and goats from Arabia Petrea; wine and wool from Damascus; wrought iron, cassia and other aromatics from the tribe of Dan; gold and precious stones from India; and with Mesopotamia, Charræ, and Babylonia, she traded in 'blue clothes and broidered work, and in chests of rich apparel, bound with cords, and made of cedar.'[1] Most gorgeous, doubtless, was the rich apparel the camels bore in chests of cedar across the Syrian desert, along the shore of Tiberias, and over Esdraela's plain to the great mart, Tyre. Under the figure of a ship built of the best materials, fitted up in the most costly style, and fully manned, Ezekiel represents the city who boasted of her 'perfect beauty,'[2] as trading in every part of the commercial

[1] Ezek. xxvii. 24. [2] Ibid. 3.

world; and then, as if in striking contrast, the prophet, immediately after giving the list of her merchandise, draws a thrilling picture of her shipwreck and utter ruin. What could be more beautiful and expressive than the following description of the consternation her fall produced among the powers that traded with her? Was ever a commercial panic so vividly described? 'Thy rowers (statesmen) have brought thee into great waters: the east wind hath broken thee in the midst of the seas. Thy riches, and thy fairs, thy merchandise, thy mariners, and thy pilots, thy calkers, and the occupiers of thy merchandise, and all thy men of war, that are in thee, and in all thy company, which is in the midst of thee, shall fall into the midst of the seas in the day of thy ruin. The suburbs shall shake at the sound of the cry of thy pilots. And all that handle the oar, the mariners, and all the pilots of the sea, shall come down from their ships, they shall stand upon the land; and shall cause their voice to be heard against thee, and shall cry bitterly, and shall cast up dust upon their heads, they shall wallow themselves in the ashes: and they shall make themselves utterly bald for thee, and gird them with sackcloth, and they shall weep for thee with bitterness of heart and bitter wailing. And in their wailing they shall take up a lamentation for thee, and lament over thee, saying, What city is like Tyrus, like the destroyed in the midst of the sea? When thy wares

went forth out of the seas, thou filledst many people; thou didst enrich the kings of the earth with the multitude of thy riches, and of thy merchandise. In the time when thou shalt be broken by the seas in the depth of the waters, thy merchandise and all thy company in the midst of thee shall fall. All the inhabitants of the isles shall be astonished at thee, and their kings shall be sore afraid, they shall be troubled in their countenance. The merchants among the people shall hiss at thee; thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt be any more.'[1]

The remains of a cathedral are to be seen among the ruins of Tyre. Yes, all has been fulfilled. Whether by the words, 'And her merchandise and her hire shall be holiness to the Lord: it shall not be treasured nor laid up; for her merchandise shall be for them that dwell before the Lord, to eat sufficiently, and for durable clothing,'[2] the prophet meant the assistance Tyre was obliged to give in the rebuilding of the Temple, or her conversion to the true faith, or both, is not clear, nor is it necessary to decide, for either view agrees with the subsequent history of Tyre. She was compelled, according to the grant her lord Cyrus made to the Jews, to furnish cedar from Lebanon for the second Temple, and within a few years after the publication of the Gospel a Christian Church was formed in her.

[1] Ezek. xxvii. 26–36. [2] Isa. xxiii. 18.

Need we any further proof that the same Divine hand which guided the pen of the prophets, governs the world than the fact that each succeeding age witnesses the fulfilment of those things spoken of by the inspired servants of God? Kingdom after kingdom has succumbed to its inevitable doom, divinely predicted. Not by faith alone, nor by the unreliable authority of profane history, but by the evidence of our own senses, may we be assured of this. The tract through Bible lands so long guarded by barriers impassable to the searcher for the evidences of the fulfilment of prophecy has been in God's mercy cleared. The insolent Moslem no longer dares the 'infidel dog' to cross his path. The ruthless marauder is restrained by law, save in his mountain fastness; and though the wild, ungovernable son of Ishmael is still lord of his ancient domain, he has become of late (for gold, it is true) the trusty guide and protector of the defenceless traveller through the great desert, so that he who will, may peer from dizzy height into the desolate palaces of rock-hewn Bozrah; may traverse the silent, deserted streets of Bashan's giant cities; may gaze upon the unsightly heaps which once were mighty Nineveh and Babylon; may tread the causeway formed of old Tyre's timbers, stones, and dust, and watch the fishers spread their nets upon the ruins of the Island Queen, now smoothed by winds, and waves, and sun; and may wander through the ruins of Judah's wasted cities.

and if he were sceptical before he will, long ere his sad pilgrimage is ended, have bowed in humble faith to Him who spake by the mouth of His prophets, that they who came after might know that He and none other is God.

Our history is almost ended. The accounts of the movement of the Chaldean army after the fall of Tyre given by ancient writers, vary so much that we must depend chiefly upon the prophets for any reliable information on the subject, and that information is very scanty. It was in the eleventh year of the captivity of Jehoiachin that Tyre was threatened by the Lord through Ezekiel for triumphing over fallen Jerusalem, and it was sixteen years afterwards, namely, in the twenty-seventh year of the captivity of Jehoiachin, that the Lord told Ezekiel that He would give Egypt to Nebuchadnezzar as a reward for his services against Tyre. It is generally supposed that after the destruction of Tyre, and the subjugation of Phœnicia, Nebuchadnezzar at once carried his arms southward, and after conquering all the country on the east of the Jordan, known as Cœlo-Syria, he attacked and subdued the Ammonites. The Moabites next succumbed to his invincible arms, and then 'he, and his people with him, the terrible of the nations,'[1] entered Egypt, which the great conqueror subdued as easily 'as a shepherd putteth on his garment,'[2] and set his

[1] Ezek. xxx. 11. [2] Jer. xliii. 12.

throne in royal Tahpanhes. According to some ancient writers, Pharaoh-Hophra was by Nebuchadnezzar's orders strangled. The Babylonians ravaged Egypt, slaughtering without mercy a great portion of the inhabitants, among whom must be reckoned the Hebrews sentenced to death by the Almighty soon after their arrival in Egypt. Nebuchadnezzar established Amasis on the Egyptian throne, and then, laden with spoil, and carrying with him a multitude of captives, Cœlo-Syrians, Ammonites, Moabites, Egyptians, and Hebrews, the mighty conqueror of the East, the king of kings, returned to Babylon, and in a very few years afterwards was a maniac, and driven from his throne to herd with beasts. Alas! for human greatness.

It must have been observed how much more generally than not Nebuchadnezzar is spelt Nebuchadrezzar in Jeremiah. In Ezekiel also *r* is used instead of *n*. We can assign no reason for this excepting that the original manuscripts vary very much in spelling of the name familiar to us only as Nebuchadnezzar.

We have not in the few lines above followed the order of events relating to the Hebrews as they occurred, for in the fifty-second chapter of Jeremiah we find that 'in the three-and-twentieth year of Nebuchadrezzar, Nebuzar-adan, captain of the guard, carried away captive of the Jews seven hundred forty and five persons.'[1] These must

[1] Jer. lii. 30.

have been Hebrews who had settled down in the own country after the murder of Gedaliah, hopi that they might be allowed to remain there u molested. But they were deceived; and thou the vengeance of Nebuchadnezzar for the murd of Gedaliah was, so far as we know, delayed for fi years, it at length fell upon the unhappy remna in Judea, innocent as they were of the death of t Pasha, and they were driven into exile.

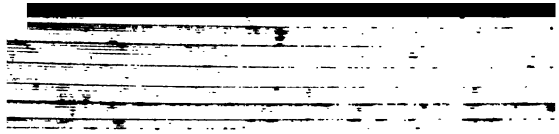
Thus was Judah utterly desolated. But the was a promise that must have sustained ar cheered the faithful ones of her children in the captivity and patriotic grief, even if Isaiah, Jer miah, Ezekiel, and their inspired contemporarie had never lived to tell of return and restoratio It was a prophecy spoken in Egypt by the patriarc Jacob seventeen hundred years before Judah fel 'The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come. The word translated 'sceptre' signifies a rod or sta of any kind, and as used here, the rod or sta which belonged to each tribe as an ensign of i authority. After the ten tribes who threw off th dynasty of David and composed the kingdom Israel had been driven into exile, they nev returned, their sceptres had departed; not so regarded the sceptre of Judah, for she, even captivity had her rulers and governors, and w represented by a prince of the house of Davi

[1] Gen. xlix. 10.

We find Cyrus giving the five thousand four hundred gold and silver vessels belonging to the Temple, and which Nebuchadnezzar had put into the house of his god Baal, into the care of 'Sheshbazzar the prince of Judah,'[1] better known by his Chaldean name Zerubbabel. After the return from captivity Judah existed for five hundred years, having her own rulers and governors still swaying her sceptre, though under the dominion of first the Persians, then the Greeks, and lastly, the Romans. She never relapsed into idolatry; her children with all their crying sins remaining true to the faith of Israel. At length the Shiloh, the Messiah, the Prince of peace, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, appeared, and shortly afterwards the sceptre of Judah departed, but only to melt away into a 'kingdom not of this world,'[2] a kingdom purely spiritual; 'a kingdom which cannot be moved.'[3]

[1] Ezra. i. 8. [2] John, xviii. 36.
[3] Heb. xii. 28.

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